

S E R M O N S

UPON SEVERAL

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

By the late Reverend

EDWARD LITTLETON, LL.D.

Fellow of ETON-COLLEGE, and Vicar of
Mapledersham, Oxon; and late Chaplain in
Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

THE THIRD EDITION:

To which is prefix'd

An Account of the AUTHOR, &c.



L O N D O N :

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MDCCLXIX.



TO THE
QUEEN'S
MOST EXCELLENT
MAJESTY.

MADAM,

I BEG leave to present
to YOUR MAJESTY
the Discourses of a Per-
son, who, when living, had the
Honour to be distinguish'd by
YOUR ROYAL FAVOUR.

The Occasion of making them
Publick is too well known to be

DEDICATION.

dissembled, and too affecting to be mentioned without Concern. The Title Page contains the History of my Misfortunes, and, as it bespeaks *the Compassion* of the Readers on account of Personal Circumstances, so it will (I hope) bespeak *their Candour* with regard to the Performance, which had never otherwise been communicated to the World.

That an Address on this Occasion, from one of your meanest Subjects, should be directed to YOUR MAJESTY, will appear strange to none, but such as are Strangers in ENGLAND, such as are unacquainted with YOUR MAJESTY'S Condescension and Generosity.

DEDICATION.

rosity. The frequent Offerings of this Kind made to YOUR MAJESTY, are so many Testimonies of your MAJESTY's Goodness, which we have seen most laudably displayed, both in the Relief of the Distressed, and the Encouragement of the Learned the Clergy in general; and those especially, who bear a nearer Relation to YOUR ROYAL PERSON, have amply experienced the gracious Influence of these Virtues.

Would to God that your dutiful Chaplain, the Author of these Discourses, had liv'd to have made this grateful Acknowledgment, which is now on a sad Occasion, and in an imperfect Manner

DEDICATION.

ner attempted by his unfortunate
Widow.

The Nature of the Case speaks
itself better than any Words I
can use, and YOUR MAJESTY'S
known Goodness confirms my
Hopes of Your Favourable Accep-
tance of these Discourses, with all
Humility presented by,

M A D A M,

YOUR MAJESTY'S *most Dutiful,*

and most Obedient Subject,

and Humble Servant,

FRANCES LITTLETON.



C O N T E N T S.

- I. *THE Duty of Rejoicing for good Times:*
Upon Eccles. vii. 14. Page 1
- II. *Self-Love the best Motive to Religion.*
Psalm xix. 11. p. 11
- III. *The separate Interests of this World and the
next reconciled.* Col. iii. 2. p. 22
- IV. *The Necessity of well Husbanding our Time.*
Psalm xc. 12. p. 33
- V. *The One thing needful.* Luke x. 41, 42. p. 46
- VI. *Mysteries no real Objections to the Truth of
Christianity.* Deut. xxix. 29. p. 60
- VII. *All Words to be accounted for at the Day of
Judgment.* Matt. xii. 36, 37. p. 73
- VIII. *The Duty of continual Watching.* Mark xiii. 37. p. 88
- IX. *The true Nature and End of Fasting.* Mat. ix. 15. p. 101
- X. *A Man's Christian Name his best Title.* 1 Cor. i. 1. p. 115
- XI. *We must not judge others by what they suffer.*
Luke xiii. 2, 3, 4, 5. p. 129
- XII. *A Posthumous Fame not worth the seeking.*
Gen. v. 25, 26, 27. p. 143
- XIII. *The Folly of Hypocrisy in this World.*
Job viii. 13. p. 157
- XIV. *The*

CONTENTS.

- XIV. *The miserable Portion of Hypocrites in the next World.* Job xxvii. 8. p. 174
- XV. *All common Forms of Swearing forbidden.*
Mat. v. 34, 35, 36. p. 197
- XVI. *We are to prove, and then hold fast that which is good.* John i. 46. p. 215
- XVII. *Our Father which art in Heaven.* Mat. vi. 9. p. 233
- XVIII. *Hallowed be thy Name.* Mat. vi. 9. p. 246
- XIX. *Thy Kingdom come.* Mat. vi. 10. p. 261
- XX. *On Mat. vi. 10. Continued.* p. 274
- XXI. *Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.* Mat. vi. 10. p. 283
- XXII. *Give us this day our daily Bread.* Mat. vi. 11. p. 298
- XXIII. *And forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors.* Mat. vi. 12. p. 309
- XXIV. *And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil.* Mat. vi. 13. p. 320





A N

Account of the AUTHOR, &c.

FROM the kind Reception these posthumous Discourses of the late Reverend Dr. *Littleton* have met with, and the approbation of some judicious Friends, I have been induced, as Proprietor of the Copy, to reprint them: And tho,' after the Reduction to this smaller Volume, nothing more could reasonably be required, I was desirous of adding something New, by prefixing an Account of the learned and ingenious Author, which, from the little Information I have been able to get, be pleas'd to accept as follows.

VOL. I.

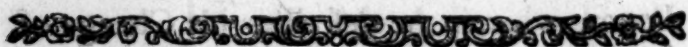
a

Mr.

Mr. *EDWARD LITTLETON*, was educated upon the Royal Foundation at *Eton-School*, under the care of that learned and excellent Master, Dr. *Snape*; who never failed, by proper Culture and Encouragement, to give a Genius like our Author's fair Play, and brighten it into all possible Perfection. And, from some Instances pointed out to me of Persons, now eminent both in Church and State, who were formerly his *Class-mates*, I cannot but think he owed somewhat to that *Emulation*, which in such great Schools is a constant Spur to Youth, and the peculiar Advantage of publick Education. Accordingly, I am told that his School-Exercises were much admir'd; and, when his Turn came, he was transplanted to *King's College, Cambridge*, in the Year 1716, with equal Applause.

A Talent for Poetry seldom rests unemploy'd; it will break out, and shew itself upon some Occasion or other. Our Author had not been long at the University, before he diverted a School-Fellow, whom he had left at *Eton*, with an humorous Poem,

Poem, wherein he describes his Change of Studies, and hints at the Progress he had made in Academical Learning. This was followed by that celebrated one on a Spider. And as both these Poems have surreptitiously crept into Miscellanies, in a very imperfect Condition; and, tho' undoubtedly (as the Author was very young when he wrote them) some of the Lines might have been improved, yet, on the contrary, they have suffer'd in the Attempt, and Names have been introduced altogether unknown to the Author; it was thought proper to give a genuine Copy of them, as transcribed by a Gentleman then at *Eton* School, from the Author's own Writing. To which is added what Remains I could find of a *Pastoral Elegy*, wrote about the same time by Mr. *Littleton*, on the Death of *R. Banks*, Scholar of the same College; And I doubt not but with equal Allowance for the Age of the Author, they will be alike acceptable to the Publick.



.. AN EPISTLE from Cambridge to Master
Henry Archer at Eton-School.

THO' plagu'd with Algebraic Lectures,
 And Astronomical Conjectures;
 Wean'd from the Sweets of Poetry,
 To Scraps of dry Philosophy;
 You see, dear *Hal*, I've found a Time
 T' express my Thoughts to you in Rhyme.
 For why, my Friend, shou'd distant Parts,
 Or Time, disjoin united Hearts?
 Since tho', by intervening Space,
 Depriv'd of speaking Face to Face,
 By faithful emissary Letter,
 We may converse, as well, or better.
 And, not to stretch my narrow Fancy,
 To shew what pretty Things I can say,
 (As some will strain at Simile,
 First work it fine, and then apply,
 Add *Butler's* Rhymes to *Prior's* Thoughts,
 And choose to mimick all their Faults,
 By Head and Shoulders bring in a Stick,
 To shew their knack at Hudibrastic;) *And I bid*
 PA tell you as a Friend and Chrony,
 How here I spend my Time and Money.—

No more majestic *Virgil's* Heights,
 Nor tow'ring *Milton's* lofty Flights,
 Nor courtly *Horace's* Rebukes,
 Who banters Vice with friendly Jokes,
 Nor *Congreve's* Wit, nor *Cowley's* Fire,
 Nor all the Beauties, that conspire

To

To place the greenest Bays, upon
The immortal Brows of *Addison*,
Prior's inimitable Ease,
Nor *Pope*'s harmonious Numbers please.
How can Poetic Flow'rs abound,
How spring in Philosophic Ground?
Homer indeed, if I would shew it,
Was both Philosopher and Poet:
But tedious Philosophic Chapters
Quite stifle my Poetic Raptures;
And I to *Phæbus* bid adieu,
When first I took my leave of you.----
Now Algebra, Geometry,
Arithmetic, Astronomy,
Optics, Chronology, and Statics,
All tiresome Points of Mathematics,
With twenty harder Names than these,
Disturb my Brains, and break my Peace.----
All seeming Inconsistencies
Are nicely solv'd by A's and B's:
Our Senses are disprov'd by Prisms,
Our Arguments by Syllogisms.
If I should confidently write,
This Ink is black, this Paper white,
They'd contradict it, and perplex one,
With Motion, Light, and its Reflexion,
And solve th' apparent Falshood, by
The curious Structure of the Eye.
Shou'd you the Poker want, and take it,
When it looks as hot, as Fire can make it,
And burn your Finger, or your Coat,
They'd flatly tell you, 'twas not hot.
The Fire, say they, has in't, 'tis true,
A Pow'r of causing Pain in you,

But no more Heat in Fire, that heats you,
 Than there is Pain in Stick that beats you.
 And thus Philosophers expound
 The Names of Odour, Taste and Sound;
 That Wine and Verjuice, Grapes and Dung
 Affect the Fibres of the Tongue;
 Carnation, Violets, and Roses
 Raise a Sensation in our Noses;
 But that there's none of us can tell,
 That those have Taste, and these have Smell:
 That, when melodious *Mason* sings,
 Or *Getting* tunes the trembling Strings,
 Or when the Trumpet's brisk Alarms;
 Call forth the *British* Youth to Arms,
 Convey'd through undulating Air,
 The Musick's only in the Ear:
 We're told, how Planets roll on high;
 How large their Orbits, and how nigh.
 But Feuds and Tumults in the Nation
 Disturb such curious Speculation.----
 No more.----This, due to Friendship, take,
 Not barely writ for writing sake;
 No longer doubt my true Respect,
 Nor call this short Delay, Neglect:
 At least, excuse it, when you see
 This Pledge of my Fidelity.
 For He, that rhymes to make you easy,
 And his Invention strains to please you;
 To shew his Friendship, cracks his Brains,
 And is a Madman, if he feigns.



On a SPIDER.

ARTIST, who underneath the Table,
Thy curious Texture hast display'd;
Who, if we may believe the Fable,
Was once a lovely blooming Maid;

II.

Insidious, restless, watchful Spider!
Fear no officious Damsel's Broom;
Extend thy artful Fabrick wider,
And spread thy Banners round my Room.

III.

Swept from the rich Man's costly Cieling,
Thou'rt welcome to my dirty Roof,
Here mayst thou find a peaceful Dwelling,
Here undisturb'd attend thy Woof:

IV.

Whilst I thy wond'rous Working stare at,
And think on hapless Poet's Fate;
Like thee confin'd to lonely Garret,
And rudely banish'd Rooms of State.

V.

And as from out thy tortur'd Body
Thou draw'st thy slender String with Pain;
So does He labour like a Noddy,
To spin Materials from his Brain.

VI.

He for some flutt'ring tawdry Creature,
That spreads her Charms before his Eye;
And that's a Conquest little better,
Than thine o'er captive Butter-fly.

VII.

VII.

Thus far 'tis plain, ye both agree,
 Your Deaths, perhaps, may better shew it ;
 'Tis ten to one but Penury
 Ends both the Spider and the Poet.



A PASTORAL ELEGY on the Death
 of *R. Banks*, Scholar of *King's-College*,
Cambridge.

DAPHNIS is dead : give Ear, ye Sylvan Pow'rs ;
 Look forth, ye Dryads, from your fragrant Bow'rs,
Daphnis is dead. Let all the rural Throng
 Mark the soft Accents of my mournful Song.
 Let balmy Zephyrs catch the fleeting Sound,
 And waft it to the vocal Rocks around.
 Let vocal Rocks and ev'ry winding Vale,
 In plaintive Notes, repeat the piteous Tale.
 Fly swift, ye plaintive Notes, and spread my Woe,
 Wide as his boundless Goodness wish'd to flow.
 When *Daphnis* died, the Sun was seen to fly
 With swifter speed, adown the western Sky ;
 Nor lucid Stars, nor Cynthia's silver Light
 Lent their auspicious Beams to chear the Night.
 Slow roll'd the Hours ; and when the Morning Ray,
 Through low'ring Clouds, disclos'd the ling'ring Day,
 No feather'd Songster from the dewy Lawn,
 With joyful Warblings hail'd the welcome Dawn ;
 No Voice of Shepherd's jocund Pipe from far,
 Stole through the sullen Silence of the Air,

But

But all was hush'd, as Nature's self had fate
In dumb Compassion, mourning *Daphnis*' Fate.

Fly swift, ye plaintive Notes, and spread my Woe,
Wide as his boundless Goodness wish'd to flow.

When *Daphnis* died, no more the wanton Doves
In anxious Murmurs told their tender Loves :

Sad *Philomel* forbore her tuneful Moan,
Alarm'd at Sorrows greater than her own.

The Savages forgot their starving Brood, [Food.

The Swains their Flocks, the Flocks their verdant

Ev'n rugged Forests did their Grief declare ;

Their Leaves were scatter'd, and their Branches bare.

And lo! the gloomy Skies relent in Show'rs ;

A deadly damp o'er-spreads the crimson Flow'rs.

The Face of Nature, gay before, appears

With Sorrows clouded, and o'erwhelm'd with Tears.

Fly swift, ye plaintive Notes, and spread my Woe,

Wide as his boundless Goodness wish'd to flow.

Ah! where does my distracted Fancy rove ?

Nor Plains beneath lament, nor Skies above.

Soon as the Spring returns, the western Breeze

Shall with new Glories crown the blooming Trees.

Soon shall the Meads in vernal Pomp appear,

And smiling Plenty grace the infant Year.

Soon shall the Flow'rs in sweet Confusion spread

Their fragrant Scents, as *Daphnis* were not dead.

Whilst I for ever feed my swelling Grief ;

And Seasons, as they change, bring no Relief.

Fly swift, ye plaintive Notes, and spread my Woe,

Wide as his boundless Goodness wish'd to flow.

But all in vain does my fond Muse contend

To sing the matchless Virtues of her Friend.

As well might her Complaints his Body raise,

As can her loudest Efforts reach his Praise.

Whether, as our Author says, his Academical Studies check'd his poetical Flights, and he rejected these Trifles for the more solid Entertainment of Philosophy, I know not; but I could meet with nothing more of this kind. I have seen indeed a poetical Epistle sent from School to *Peniston Powney*, Esq; but as this was wrote occasionally, and scarce intelligible to any, but those who were then at *Eton*, I have omitted it. So to return.

In the Year 1720, Mr. *Littleton* was recalled to *Eton* as an Assistant in the School. In which Office he was honoured and beloved by all the young Gentlemen that came under his Direction, and so esteem'd by the worthy Provost and Fellows, that, upon the Death of the Reverend Mr. *Malcher* in the Year 1727, they elected him into their Society, and presented him to the Living of *Maple-Derham* in *Oxfordshire*. He then married *Frances*, one of the Daughters of *Barnham Good*, Esq; a Lady endow'd with all the Accomplishments that can render the marriage State happy. On June the 9th, 1730, he was appointed Chaplain in Ordinary to their Majesties:

jesties ; and in the same Year took his Doctor of Laws Degree at *Cambridge*. But, tho' an admired Preacher and an excellent Scholar, he seems to have been as little ambitious of appearing in Print, as the great Mr. *Hales*, formerly of the same College ; not having printed any thing, that I know of, in his Life-time ; and I am apt to think, from what I have heard, that, like Him too, *he never penn'd any thing, until he needs must* *. He died of a Fever in the Year 1734, and was buried in his own Parish-Church of *Maple-Derham* ; leaving behind him a Widow and three Daughters ; for whose Benefit, under the Favour and Encouragement of her late Majesty Queen *Caroline*, these Discourses were first printed : Which, Courteous Reader, without detaining you any longer, I shall now leave to speak for Themselves.

* See the Life of Mr. *Hales*, prefixed to his *Golden Remains*.



...and in the same Year took his
Doctor of Laws Degree at Cambridge. But
tho' an excellent Preacher, and an excellent
Scholar, he seems to have been a little
unhappy in appearing in Print, as the
great Mr. Alder, Secretary of the House of
Commons, not having printed any thing, else
I know not, in his lifetime; and I am
not to think, in any what I have heard that
this thing was, as necessary, or any thing
more to be said, as I have said of a Fever
in the Year 1734, and was buried in his
own Parish Church of St. Andrew's, and
leaving behind him a Widow and three
Daughters; for whose Benefit, under the
Favour and Encouragement of that late
Majesty Queen Caroline, the Duchess
went first printed, in which, Concerning
Reading without detaining you any longer,
I shall now leave to speak for themselves.

* See the Life of Mr. Alder, prefixed to his Gospel
Sermons.



C O M M



The Duty of Rejoycing for good Times.

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

KING on the Coronation-Day,

October 1732.

ECCLES. vii. 14.

In the Day of Prosperity rejoyce.



HE great and wise King, who was the SERM.

Author of these Words, has taught us I.

elsewhere, that to *every Thing there is a Season, and a Time for every Purpose under Heaven.* Accordingly, he points

out, in the Words before us, the proper Season for the Exercise of our Joy. It is *the Day of Prosperity*; by which we are to understand, either, *First*, all prosperous and good Times in general; or *Secondly*, in particular, those Times or Seasons, when any private or

Vol. I.

B

publick

SERM. publick Blessing has been convey'd to us. In either of these Senses, it is a Precept of great Weight, and may at this Time be very seasonably considered.

I.

First then, let us suppose the Royal Preacher's Words to extend to all prosperous and good Times in general; and let us also suppose, that they are not only a Permission, but a Precept or Direction to rejoyce in those Blessings, which, at such Times, we do all severally enjoy. I say let us suppose this to be the meaning of the Words. For though they may, indeed, be so limited and restrained, as to signify no more, than a bare Licence or Permission to rejoyce in the good things, which God's Providence dispenses, as if it had been said, we may innocently delight, or lawfully take Pleasure in them; yet since, besides this, there is another Kind of Joy, arising from the Sense of God's Goodness and Compassion in imparting such Blessings to us, and since the Exercise of this Joy will be shewn hereafter to be a Duty we are all bound to pay, I think it more likely, that my Text was intended as a *Precept*, to cultivate and promote this Joy: A Subject more useful and important in itself, and more worthy of the Royal Preacher's Care.

This being supposed to be the Meaning of the Words, I proceed, in pursuance of the Doctrine contained in them, to shew,

First, that in all prosperous and good Times in general, it is the Duty of all Persons, in their several Stations, to rejoyce in those publick, as well as private Blessings, which God's Providence bestows upon us. As to private Blessings, all prosperous Events, from the happy Issue of our own Projects and Designs, do naturally fill the Heart with Joy: And if Men would

would but sanctify and improve this Joy, by a grateful Sense of God's Bounty to them, they would do all that is necessary to make a *Virtue* of it, and to convert the Success of their temporal Designs to their spiritual and eternal Welfare. But besides these private, incidental Blessings, there are others of a more general and publick Nature, which, though they are greater and more important in themselves, are less apt to strike the Mind with Pleasure. These I shall distinguish into natural and political: By natural Blessings, understanding those, which God has dealt to Mankind in general, however situate with respect to Government, or whatever Kind of Polity they enjoy; such, in particular, (not to mention all) are the Use of our Bodies, the Exercise of our Reason, the Light of the Sun, the Benefit of the Air, and the Plenty with which the Earth supplies us. These, by the Consent of all Nations in the World, are understood to be the Gift of Heaven, and consequently proper Matter of Praise and Thanksgiving, which is what I mean by religious Joy. To raise our Pleasure and Delight in these, there is nothing more required, than to attend to them. Whenever we do this, if we do not actually rejoyce in them, we can have no Pleasure or Satisfaction in our Being. As to these Blessings, therefore, it is enough to leave Men to the Convictions of their own Hearts concerning them, which, if they will but think, will sufficiently suggest how much Reason they have to return Thanks to God for them, as necessary, in a manner, to give Worth and Value to all the other Blessings he bestows on us. From these therefore I pass on to consider, in the next Place, those Blessings which I call Political, arising from the Virtues of those, who

The Duty of Rejoycing for good Times.

SERMON. preside over us, and the Forms of Government, under which we live. These also, as they tend to promote Peace and Quiet, as well as to our living in all Godliness and Honesty, must be considered as things of the highest Moment, and as just Matter of Gratitude and Thanksgiving. Since therefore there are some, who do not seem to know, that it is our Duty to delight and take Pleasure in them, I shall briefly set forth the Necessity of so doing, by suggesting a few Reasons for it.

The first that I shall mention, is what obliges us to rejoyce in all Kinds of Prosperity whatsoever, *viz.* because it is the Gift of God. The Proof of this it would be needless to undertake; because none will deny, that to God's sovereign Direction all human Happiness, of what Kind soever, must be referred, as to its proper Source. To him therefore we must give the Glory, to him we must return the Thanks: And particularly with respect to the Point now in View, since the Scripture tells us, that *by Him Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice*, they teach us in Effect, that for the *Blessings* of their Reigns, for the *Execution* of *Justice*, for the Living under good and wholesome Laws, for the Peace and Prosperity of the Nation, in *which* we live, and above all, for the Enjoyment of our *Liberties* and *Religion*, we are bound in Duty to rejoyce in the Lord, and to give Thanks to him for a Remembrance of his Holiness. On the contrary, from the same Principle it will as evidently appear, that to murmur and repine in such Times as these, when Liberty is enjoyed in as full and ample Manner, as was ever known in any Nation upon the Earth; when the Properties of Men are as well secur'd, as the most jealous Heart can wish them; when the

Thoughts

The Duty of Rejoycing for good Times.

5

Thoughts of Men are not fettered and confined by the false Establishments of a superstitious Church, but are indulged in as great (if not greater) Scope to range at large, and search out for Truth, as was ever granted in any Christian Country; I say, to murmur and repine in such Times as these, to sow the Seeds of Discontent in the Minds of our Fellow-Subjects, and to bring an evil Report on God's Blessings to us, is an ungrateful Part with respect to him, and a base Attempt to disseminate and spread abroad the same Spirit in the Minds of others, teaching *them*, in their Turns, to withdraw their Gratitude, and depriving them thereby of the most pleasing Exercise in which the Heart of Man can be employed. And this I lay down as a sufficient Reason, why we ought to encourage that religious Joy, with respect to the Peace and Prosperity of our Country, which the Royal Preacher in my Text prescribes. But

Secondly, Another Reason, why we ought to do this, is, because it is no more than a just Debt of Gratitude to those, who, *under* God, are his Instruments and Agents, in conveying these Blessings to us. Little do we know, in our humble Stations, of the Cares and Troubles which good Princes suffer, while they labour to promote the Happiness of their People. But enough we know of the *Difficulties* they encounter, the Toil and Fatigue they sustain for our Sakes to entitle them to the highest Duty and Respect. Reason alone and Common Sense would teach us, that this cannot with any Justice be withheld; The Rules of Christianity confirm their Claim to it. And little does he know either of Reason or Religion, who thinks he may presume on any slight Occasion, which either his own Jealousy or Resentment may suggest, to call in question the Conduct

SERM. of his lawful Governor, from whose tender Care for
 1. his People's Liberty, he himself derives the Licence
 to defame him. But

Thirdly, Another Reason, why we are bound in Duty to testify our Joy in the abovementioned Blessings, is, because it is a Debt, which not only our Superiors, but the Publick also may, in Justice, claim. The Zeal, which is exerted by every private Person, in Defence of that Government, which supports us all, is, in some measure, a Support to the Government itself, and tends therefore to the Benefit of the Whole. As long as the People have no Jealousy of their Prince, and as long as the Prince has no private Views, inconsistent with the true Interest of his People, this Harmony between both is the best Security to the Publick, against all Kinds of Danger, that may arise. He therefore, who goes about to destroy that Harmony, by raising needless Jealousies in his Fellow-Subjects Minds, is an Enemy to the publick Peace; He, on the other hand, who would cultivate and promote it, is a Friend to the publick Happiness of his Country, because he strengthens and supports the Interest of that Government, from which the publick Happiness is derived. Since therefore it is the Duty of every private Person to promote, as much as possible, the publick Happiness of his Country, and since this Happiness is most effectually secured by a good Harmony between Prince and People, and since the best Method to promote this Harmony, is, to be pleased with the publick Blessings we enjoy, it must needs be our Duty, on all fit Occasions, not only to rejoyce, but to testify our Joy, to declare the Pleasure and Satisfaction we receive from the Care and Vigilance of those who are set over us, in order to strengthen and support this Harmony,

The Duty of Rejoycing for good Times.

7

Harmony, and thereby to promote the Happiness of SERM.
our Country. How far it is the Duty of Men in publick Characters, to rejoyce, and to bless God, for I.
those Powers and Opportunities which he has given them to do good to others, it is not, *here*, necessary to observe. Be it sufficient, that we practise, in our several Stations, our Duty both to them and him: Nor suffer ourselves to be led aside by Custom, and by the pestilent Example, which some Men have given us, to repine and murmur, instead of praising and giving Thanks for the publick Happiness and Prosperity of our Country. Nor let the little Pleasure, if any Pleasure it can be to us, of censuring those, whom God bids us honour, deprive us of the more exquisite, and more generous Satisfaction of being pleased with what is meant to please us. To return Good for *Evil*, is what the Gospel hath exacted: But to return Good for Good, is what Nature teaches, and what, in the common Notions and Apprehensions of Mankind, it is a Mark of great Baseness to refuse. Obedience to *forward* Governors our Religion presses on us: But to pay our Obedience to the Good and Gentle, methinks, we should want no Inviting. To be patient and submissive is, at all Times, our Duty: But to be pleased and happy, when there is nothing to make us otherwise, one would think our own Hearts should lead us.

I am not ignorant, that the Times we live in, have been often represented in a very different Light. But if Ease and Affluence, if Liberty and Religion, if the Security of our Persons, of our Properties and Estates, may be allowed as Evidence against such Suggestions, there is no need to be particular on this Subject. This is a Kind of Evidence, which we see and feel, and

SERM. we must utterly despair of all other Arguments, where

I. these can work no Conviction.

And considering from whose Influence these Blessings are derived to us, and in whose Royal Presence I am speaking, I am not unmindful of a Decency to be observed, which must check me here, and restrain that Zeal, with which the Heart of a good Man must naturally overflow, while it dwells on these pleasing Subjects. I hasten therefore to the other Sense of my Text, in which it may be understood as an Exhortation to us to exert our Joy at those Seasons in particular, when any publick or private Blessing has been conveyed to us. As to private Blessings, I observed before, that we naturally take Pleasure in them. And I observed withal, that as to publick Blessings, we are less apt to be attentive to them. But how necessary it is, at some certain Seasons, to raise up in our Minds the Remembrance of those Blessings, which are of a more general and publick Nature, the Nation, I have just mentioned, shews. The Backwardness and Aversion, Men are apt to have to the devout Remembrance of God's Favours to them, has occasioned in the Church the Appointment of certain Days, to be constantly observed, as the Year goes round, in Remembrance of several publick Blessings. And surely, if such distant and remote Events, as some of those, which we still commemorate, deserve to be distinguished with such Marks of Honour, as are paid by good Christians to them, much more do those Days, to which we are obliged for the present and more immediate Blessings we enjoy, deserve to be marked out with the highest Tokens of Respect, that the most grateful Heart can pay. Now of all those Days, which do naturally remind us of the publick Happiness and Prosperity of our Country,

The Duty of Rejoycing for good Times. 9

Country, there is but one Appointed for the Exercise SERM.
of that Joy, which it is my Business at this Time to I.
recommend. And surely the Loyalty of good and
faithful Subjects, the Piety of good Christians, the
Gratitude which good Protestants must naturally conceive for the Establishment of their civil and religious Rights, cannot fail to dispose us to take *all* Occasions, and to observe with Pleasure *all* Times and Seasons, that may revive the Memory of such signal Blessings. And of all the Times that may be so employed, what can be more proper, than that auspicious Day, when the Crown was placed on that sacred Head, on which may it ever flourish! How insensible must we be to our own *greatest* Happiness, how unworthy of the many Blessings we enjoy, if we do not take Occasion, at such a Time as this, to return Thanks to the great Being, who bestows them! Joy and Gladness, and Gratitude to God, are the proper Return, and the only one we can make, for the Continuance of these his Blessings to us. May this return be made by all, and particularly by those whose Eyes are not open to see their own, and their Country's Happiness! And may those, who do see it, and are joyful in it, rejoyce with such a sober and religious Joy, as may leave no Stings behind it! There is a certain Wildness and Extravagance of Mirth, too apt to be indulged at such happy Seasons, which, instead of raising and elevating the Soul, does but sink it into Shame and Sorrow. *For even in Laughter the Heart is sorrowful, and the End of that Mirth is Heaviness.* For this we may take the Royal Preacher's Word, who has also said elsewhere of *Laughter, it is Madness, and of Mirth, what doth it?* What doth it, but to deceive and seduce the Heart, and betray us into Sin and Folly? It is not therefore that tu-

SERM. multuous Joy, which is apt to oppress and overwhelm
 I. the Soul, and to drown all the Faculties of Reason ;
 but it is that sedate and sober Pleasure, that rational
 Delight which a good Man feels, from the Sense of
 God's Favour to him, which the Royal Preacher in
 my Text prescribes. Joy is, at best, but a dissolute
 and wanton, an unnatural and unbecoming Quality,
 when it has not Virtue for its Foundation and Support.
 And even when it *has*, it is apt to betray that Virtue,
 by rendering us inattentive to our Duty. For indeed,
 we are never so much off our Guard, never so much
 exposed to the Power of Temptation, as when we are
 gratifying that giddy Passion. To arm us therefore against
 the ill Effects of it, and to fill our Hearts with a well-
 grounded Joy, by rendering us proper Objects of those
 publick Blessings, which as on this Day were conferred
 upon us, let us, first, resolve, (if it is not yet done) to
 season our Hearts with a true Gratitude to God for
 these, and all his other Benefits : And let us declare the
 inward Gratitude of our Hearts, by the outward Testi-
 mony of Praise and Thanksgiving. Let us animate and
 inflame each others Souls with a true Zeal for the
 Honour of our King, and for the Peace and Prosperity
 of our Country ; But, lastly, let us not in the mean
 time forget to fortify and prepare against those Temp-
 tations to whtch the Transport of our Joy may lead
 us. Thus guarded and secured, thus sanctified and im-
 proved, the Joy we now feel, may be a good Prefage
 of a long Series of Blessings *here*, and, what is much
 more, may confirm our Hope of that Joy, which we
 expect hereafter.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.



Self.



Self-Love the best Motive to Religion.

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

KING at Hampton-Court,

October 21, 1733.

PSALM XIX. II.

— *And in keeping them there is great Reward.*



HERE are no Sorts of Argument SERM. II.
 more likely to affect us, than those
 which concern our Interest; this being
 a Point which, so far as we understand
 it, we seldom fail, with great Atten-
 tion, to pursue. The Misfortune is,
 that we very frequently mistake it, and are apt to em-
 brace That as our greatest Interest, which in Truth is
 very far from being so: And this want of Judgment
 is in nothing more remarkable, than in preferring
 things sensual and of a short Existence, to those things
 which are both spiritual and eternal.

The

SERM.
II.

The Scripture therefore, which was designed to lay before us both the Rule of Duty, and the best Motives to enforce it, abounds with Exhortations to the Practice of Religion from the Consideration of the Rewards annex to it. And good Reason was there for insisting on this Topick, since all other Arguments must be utterly invalid, unless, some Way or other, they are made to terminate in this. Self-Love is a Principle so inseparable from our Nature, and which operates with so much Force upon it, that no Motive or Inducement, of what Kind soever, can stand in Competition with it. It is always, more or less, how invisible soever, at the Bottom of every Action we perform. Even those, which are most disinterested, if pursued to their Fountain-head, will be discovered to have sprung from this. Every Virtue we can practise, however secret and reclusive, how little soever it may aim at Glory, or any Recompense or Return from Men, has still some Motive, which, if well examined, will center in this Principle of Self-Love. For whether we are actuated by the Hope of Heaven, which is a principle, which is profest by Christians, or whether we are moved to perform virtuous Actions by the mere Pleasure and Delight we take in them, in either of these Cases, the Principle of Self-Love is evidently the sole Motive on which we act: He that is influenced by present Pleasure, being certainly as much under the Direction of Self-Love, as he that has a future Recompense in View.

From hence it may be remarked, how absurdly it has been suggested, that the Spirit of Christianity is too mean and mercenary to proceed from its great Author, God. For on what other Principle will you find a Motive to the Practice of moral Duty? Take
away

away the Profit or the Pleasure you reap from it, both SERM.
which are, alike, mercenary and selfish, and what II.
have you left, on any other Principle, that can move ~
you to perform virtuous Actions? The Fitness, it may
be said perhaps, or the Reasonableness of the Thing.
But does Fitness or Reasonableness lay you under a
Constraint? Are you absolutely obliged, by a Phy-
sical Necessity, to do every thing that you think fit
and reasonable? No, surely: For if so, there would
be no Vice; since every Man in this Case would be
necessarily constrained to do every thing, that he
thought consonant to Reason. What Principle is it, then,
that we must suppose to move us to comply with what
Reason dictates? Is it not the Pleasure and Delight it
yields? the Complacency and Satisfaction, that a
Man feels within him, in acting up to the Dignity of
his Nature? And what is this, but another Name for
Self-Love?

The same Answer will recur, if instead of Fitness
or Reasonableness, we substitute the Name of Come-
liness, or Beauty, or Harmony, or Order, or Pro-
portion, or whatever else has been used by Writers of
refined Taste and Genius, to imbellish and adorn
moral Virtue. For what are all these but different
Images and Allusions, derived from the Impressions
of the several Objects of Sense, and applied (perhaps
with great Beauty and Propriety, but to no Manner
of Purpose, that I can see) to Virtue? For if Virtue
be indeed (and who can say it is not?) so very amiable,
as by these Metaphors it is described, where is the
Disinterestedness of pursuing it for its own Sake?
Surely, the more amiable any Object is, the more
there is of Self-Love in the Pursuit of it. This No-
tion therefore is not only against Us, but even against
those,

SERM. those, who have advanced it. For how is it less mercenary to be allured to Virtue by the present Pleasure and Delight it yields, than by the Prospect of a future Recompense from God? If it be wrong in Christians to have an Eye to the Reward, in the Practice of any Gospel-Duty, it is wrong also in them, in the Practice of moral Virtue, to have Regard to any Pleasure it may afford: Or if right in them to accept a present Recompense, it is right also in Christians to rely on God's Promise, and to wait patiently for a better Recompense hereafter.

But perhaps it will be said, It is not Fitness or Reasonableness, or the Beauty and attractive Influence of Virtue, but the Will of God alone, the Authority of our Creator, on which the Obligation to moral Virtue stands. Let this be allowed. But what shall we get by it? Does the Will of God unavoidably constrain us to act constantly in Obedience to it? No more, than the Fitness or Reasonableness of Things. How then does it act on us? What is there, that can induce us to act in Obedience to God's Will at all? His Power, will you say? or the Fear of Vengeance from him? But this is the very Principle you oppose. You will not allow us to live in Fear of Hell, because it is an abject Principle: Why then in fear of Punishment in general? Will it be said, Gratitude is sufficient to engage us? For it is but reasonable, that he who gave us Being, should receive from us all Tokens of Respect. It is true, this is reasonable: But why should we follow Reason? I mean, on the Principle which is advanc'd against us. To follow Reason, is a mercenary thing; forasmuch as it carries its Reward along with it, in the high Pleasure and Satisfaction, which it affords. Gratitude, in particular, to the great
 Author

Author of our Being, is one of the most pleasing and delightful Exercises, in which the Mind of Man can be employed. In this, and in the Contemplation of his all-glorious Nature, will probably consist our chief Happiness hereafter; and therefore it is no wonder, if, imperfect as it is, there is some Degree of Pleasure in it here; so much at least, as may sufficiently convince us, that it is not a Thing so very destitute of Reward, as, it seems, some would fain imagine it to be. In short, if you will needs set aside Rewards, and put us beyond the Reach of Punishment, I would ask, What can possibly induce us to be thus grateful, but the mere Pleasure and Delight we take in it? And does not this bring us back to Self-Love again? For what can be a stronger Indication of it, than choosing to do that, which is most agreeable to ourselves, and which tends most to give us Pleasure and Delight? Consider things in what Light you please, take your own Hypothesis, be it what you will, and still you will find, if you pursue it to the utmost, you will stand in need of this Principle to support it.

But if this be admitted, what becomes of Friendship? What becomes of those generous and humane Affections, which prompt us to perform Actions of Beneficence and Compassion, and to postpone our own Interest to that of others? Are these derived all from the Principle of Self-Love? As sure, as any Action we perform. For what is there dissonant, or contradictory to Reason, in supposing such Actions to be performed by Christians, in Expectation of some Re-compense to be received? But let it be supposed, that such Acts as these, have no Respect to any future Re-compense. Is there, then, no Pleasure, or Satisfaction, in them? I appeal to those, whose indulgent

Hearts

SERM. Hearts incline them to such Acts of Mercy. Do they
II. not lighten and unload the Soul of that Burden, which
 ~~~~~ Compassion lays on it? Do they not fill it with transporting Pleasure, which nothing else but such Sentiments can inspire? And is not this the very Motive, which inclines them so to act, and for want of which others fail to act so? Be it therefore the mere Spirit of Humanity and Compassion, or be it the Sense of having done our Duty, or whatever else it be, that gives this Delight to us, as long as we are prompted and impelled by this to any Act of Beneficence or Compassion, we can resolve it into no Principle, but Self-Love.

In gratifying this, we may sacrifice indeed our lesser and inferior Interests to those of others. But the Reason must be, because we take Delight in performing such Acts of Mercy. Let any Man that does them, but consult his Heart, and consider, what Motives or Inducements he has to do them; and he will find, the Reason is, that they are pleasing to himself, or else, that he thinks they will be acceptable to God, by whom he will be rewarded for them.

The greatest Objection that seems to lie against this, may be drawn from those Instances of Heroick Friendship, in which Men would have died willingly for their Friends. But even in these Instances, if considered rightly, we shall find there may be a great Mixture of Self-Love. For the Proof of which, not to urge that all Friendship is originally contracted by both Parties that engage in it, not for the Sake of each other, but themselves (for the natural Aversion we all have to Solitude, the Advantages we reap from a Confidence in each other, the mutual Succour and Assistance we receive from it, and above all, the peculiar



peculiar Satisfaction of being loved by those, whose SERM.  
moral Qualities we admire, none of which can be II.  
denied to be a selfish Principle, are the true Fountains,   
from which Friendship springs;) but I say, not to urge,  
or insist on this, it appears from the very End and  
Design of Self-love, which is a natural Instinct that  
God has planted in us, to preserve us from Danger,  
by making every Creature as safe as possible in the  
Custody of himself, that it cannot be rivalled or over-  
come by Friendship, or by any other Principle what-  
soever. If it could, it would not answer the wise  
End of Providence, which was, to preserve the whole  
Species from Destruction, by causing every Creature  
to be careful of his own Safety, and to prefer his own  
Interest to that of others. When therefore we meet,  
in History, with Accounts of such Persons as would  
willingly have died each for other, tho' *greater Love*  
*than this hath been shown by no Man*, yet even from these  
Instances we must not presently conclude, that Self-  
love had no influence upon them. For if he who did  
this, were not moved to do it by the sudden Transports  
of Romantick Passion (in which Case no Inference  
can be made from it) but by the cool and sober Dic-  
tates of his Reason, who can tell on what Principle  
he might act? Who knows, but the Prospect of his  
own desolate Condition, when he should have lost in  
a Friend the chief Comfort of his Life, the Fear of  
being destitute, afflicted, and forsaken, might be the  
chief Inducement to lay down his Life? Who knows  
how far the Love of Glory might inspire him, or the  
Prospect of a better Recompense, possibly reserved  
in some future State, for such an Instance of Heroick  
Love? Friendship, it is certain, in Heathen Systems  
of Morality, was treated among the Moral Virtues,  
Fortitude,

SERM. Fortitude, or Magnanimity and Contempt of Danger,  
 II. was esteemed a Moral Virtue too. In consequence  
 of these Principles, to a Man who thought himself at  
 Liberty to deprive himself of Life at Pleasure, as in  
 the Heathen World many did, what could seem a more  
 generous or heroick Action, than to lay it down for  
 the Preservation of his Friend? or what could seem  
 to such a Man to give a better Title to a great and  
 ample Recompense hereafter?

But whether this, or the Love of Glory, or the  
 Fear of losing what they held so dear, and on which  
 much of their present Happiness depended, was the  
 Motive which gave Birth to such Acts as these; as  
 long as any possible Account can be given of them,  
 consistent with this Principle of Self-Love, nothing  
 can be inferred from these Instances against it. It is  
 a Principle of such a Nature, that if it operates at all,  
 it must needs triumph over all that can oppose it, being  
 planted for this Purpose in us; nor can any Man, un-  
 less he be disordered in his Understanding, or under  
 the Impulse of ungovernable Passion, act wilfully and  
 deliberately against it, in Points which concern his  
 most important Interests.

If in what has been said, I may be thought by any  
 to have put Moral Virtue on too low a Foot, I can  
 only say, that I have endeavoured to represent it, as  
 it seems to exist really in Nature; not as it is dressed up  
 by Men of Parts and Genius, who derive human  
 Actions from fine speculative Principles, beautiful in  
 Idea, and very fit to be admired, but much too re-  
 fined for Practice. The Love of ourselves, by the great  
 Abuse of it, is, it seems, grown so odious to us, that  
 we cannot bear to find the best Actions we perform  
 should be derived from so corrupt a Source. Here-  
 upon

upon we set ourselves to work on the Discovery of SERM.  
 some Principle less derogating from the Dignity of our II.  
 Nature, that we may seem to have greater and more  
 sublime Conceptions, to be moved by more generous  
 and disinterested Affections, and to act upon better  
 Principles than other Men. But the great Absurdity  
 in the mean time is this, that while in Speculation we  
 amuse our Fancies with the Notion of being acted by  
 such noble Views, we are still governed by the same  
 Motives with other Men. We still continue to be sway-  
 ed by Self-love, and perhaps by Self-love not suffi-  
 ciently instructed what, indeed, is the true Interest it  
 should pursue. He that would see this, must look be-  
 yond the Grave; and there he will find that, which,  
 if he loves himself, will be a standing Motive in all  
 Circumstances and Conditions, to practise the greatest  
 and most exalted Virtues: And that is much more  
 than can be expected from him, who shuts himself out  
 from this glorious Prospect, who rejects the noble Views  
 and precious Promises of the Gospel, relying on Prin-  
 ciples, which, in Times of hard Trial, he will find  
 to be but *broken Reeds*. In short, let the Hope of a  
 future Recompense be admitted, and immediately  
 Self-love, directing us to pursue That, directs us to  
 all Kinds of Virtue. But take away this, and from  
 that very Instant Self-love takes a different Turn,  
 teaching us to pursue That, which, in this present  
 Life, will afford us the greatest Pleasure and Delight.  
 If Virtue will do this, (as indeed it often will) so far,  
 on this Principle, it may be followed. But when once  
 it comes to thwart and oppose our Passions, when it  
 robs us of our Pleasure, when it bids us refuse or for-  
 sake any thing, that we love, what have we to sup-  
 port us then? Self-love, which should help us out, has  
 taken

SERM taken Arms against us, and, since we despair of any

II.

future Recompense, advises us to pursue present Pleasure. In vain shall Reason, or any other Principle, interpose in this Case to save us. Nothing can persuade us to make the least Resistance, till Self-love shall change Sides again: Till instead of the low Pleasures and Satisfaction of Sin, we discover something in Virtue more worthy our Pursuit, as abounding with greater and more sublime Enjoyments, and as tending more to the final Happiness of Man.

The Reason, why this may be received with Prejudice, is, because we are accustomed to consider Self-love, as a thing opposite to all Religion and Virtue. And such, indeed, in some Instances it proves, not because the Principle is itself defective, or insufficient to support Piety and Virtue, but because the Nature of our Interest is misjudged. When we wilfully violate and transgress God's Laws, it is not, surely, because we love ourselves better, than we do when we strictly keep them; but because we make a foolish and imprudent Choice, we pursue our Happiness by such Ways and Methods, as tend to make us miserable for ever. The Reason why we sin, is, because we love ourselves, and the Reason of our being virtuous, is the same. In one Case only, we are directed by our Reason, in the other by some headstrong Passion. In one we pursue a real, a solid, and substantial, in the other, a short, fleeting Happiness. But in neither of these Cases do we mean Harm to ourselves: For the Principle of Self-Love is so twisted and interwoven with every other Principle of our Nature, that it cannot fail, either mediately, or immediately, to affect us in every moral Action we perform. And from hence it is plain, that those, who reproach Christians with acting



acting on a mean and unworthy Principle, in *hav-*SERM  
*ing Respect to the Recompense of the Reward,* must II.  
 either be content to withdraw that Censure, or else  
 take the Shame of being influenced to Virtue by a  
 mean and unworthy Principle themselves.

Let therefore the eternal Reasons and Relations of Things, or let the Will of God, be the *Rule* of Duty; for, as such, they differ only in their Name: But as Motives, or Inducements; as Ties, or Obligations; let them take into Partnership this Principle of Self-love, without which they will lose all their Influence. Let us not be ashamed in the Practice of our Duty, to act on such Principles, as God has planted in us, nor with such Views, as he proposes to us. Let us raise the Love of God to as great a Height as we can: And who can raise it higher, than he, who stedfastly believes that Mystery of Divine Love, which was unfolded in the Gospel, *viz.* our Redemption from eternal Death? Let us cherish and indulge the most benevolent Affections towards God's Creature, and our Brother, Man. For who can do it better, than he who sets before him, together with all other Motives and Engagements, the Example as well as Precept of a crucified Redeemer? But let us, in the mean time, think it no Reproach, to keep in view the precious Promises, which the Gospel makes to us, of an *Inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in the Heavens for us*; nor imagine it a Disparagement to God's Holy Laws, that they need to be enforced by the Argument in my Text, that *in keeping of them there is great Reward.*

Now to God the Father, &c.





*The separate Interests of this World  
and the next reconciled.*

A

# S E R M O N

On Col. iii. 2.

*Set your Affection on Things above, not on  
Things on the Earth.*

SERM.  
III.



THE separate Interests of this World and the next, make Man a very fickle Being. As he is compounded of two different Principles, one of them devoted to the Concerns of this World, and the other looking forward to Eternity, it is no Wonder to see him varying his Purposes, as this or that Principle has the Ascendant. There are some indeed so steadily religious, and others so profligate and abandoned, that they seem to have but one Principle to direct them. But the greatest Part of us are wavering and irresolute; sometimes misled by the Blandishments of Sense, and at other times reclaim'd by Reason; so that our Lives are chequer'd with Vice and Virtue, and divided between Sin and Repentance.

Now

Now the Cause of this disorderly Variety in our SERM.  
Actions, is evidently the misplacing of our Affections. III.

If we would but suffer them to be conducted by Reason, we should never feel such a Conflict within ourselves from the Remonstrances of that busy Monitor: We should be secur'd from all Levity and Error, and consequently from all Sorrow and Disappointment: We should be taught not to look for substantial Happiness, where no substantial Happiness can be found; or, in other Words, we should be taught, as we are taught in my Text, to *set our Affection on Things above, not on Things upon the Earth.*

Reason, I say, could she speak for herself, would give us the very same Advice with the Apostle. And 'tis pity therefore, that such excellent Advice should meet with such an ill Reception. But as the sensual Man doth not well consider it, so the superstitious doth not understand it. Neither of them obeys the Precept, as he ought: Tho' the former offends knowingly and wilfully, and the latter out of Ignorance and Mistake. One of them receives the Precept like a stubborn Enemy, the other like a ceremonious Friend: And accordingly one treats it with Contempt and Aversion, the other with too much Respect. To be plain; the sensual Man refuses to comply with the Command, lest it should rob him of his *unlawful* Pleasures: And the superstitious adheres so strictly to the Letter of it, that he loses even those Pleasures which are lawful: Whereas were the Design, of the Apostle understood, the Libertine might have the truest Satisfaction that this World affords, without deserting the Interests of the next; and the Devotee might have all the spiritual Ecstasy he desires, without sequestering himself from his Business

SERM. nefs or his Pleasures. In a word, the latter might  
 III. be convinced, as great a Paradox as it seems, that  
 a Christian may in some Sense be a Man of Pleasure; and the former persuaded of what is as great a Paradox to *him*, that there's no Man of Pleasure, like the Christian.

Now all this will most evidently appear, by considering the three following Propositions.

I. First, that whatever is meant by this Precept of the Apostle, or any other of the same *Nature* in Holy Writ, it can never be understood to prohibit that Attention to the Concerns of this present World, which is necessary to our Well-being in it.

Nor, Secondly, can it be suppos'd to exclude us from the Enjoyment of those innocent Delights, which Nature has pour'd out about us.

But, Thirdly and Lastly, That, so far as is consistent with the necessary Business and the innocent Delights of Life, *it is no less our Interest, than our Duty* to set our Affections on things above.

First, I say, that whatever is meant by this Precept of the Apostle, or any other of the same Nature in Holy Writ, it can never be understood to prohibit that Attention to the Concerns of this present World, which is necessary to our Well-being in it. To provide for our own Security, is indeed as much required of us as any other Act of Duty. Self-Preservation is a Moral Principle, and as such we are oblig'd to comply with it. Luxury and Intemperance, and all that Tribe of Vices, by which we are said to sin against ourselves, are none of them any otherwise criminal, than as they offend against this inviolable Law. For the same Reason all Neglects and Omissions, by which we are wanting to  
 our

our own Security, are, in Proportion to their Im-<sup>SERM.</sup> portance, Sins. Besides this, there are many other <sup>III.</sup> Duties arising from the several Relations we stand in, none of which can be practis'd, as they ought, without an Attention to the Business of the World. So that to abandon the Society of Mankind, and immure ourselves in Cells and Cloisters, as it is taught and practis'd in Popish Countries, under Pretence of setting our Affections on Things above, is so far from being the Duty of a Christian, that, as long as the Health of our Bodies and the Strength of our Minds enable us to be useful in another Way, it is a downright Desertion of our Duty; a devout Lethargy, a spiritual Repose, agreeable neither to Grace nor Nature. In our natural State we were form'd for Action, and Christianity has introduc'd no new Duty surely, inconsistent with the Laws of Nature. We are told indeed, that if we *seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, every thing, we want beside, shall be added unto us.* But this Promise itself supposes we have no Hope of God's Succour and Protection, without the Concurrence of our own Endeavours. For why should we be commanded to *seek the Kingdom of God first*, and principally, if there were not some other secondary Pursuit? And what can that secondary Pursuit be, but the Concerns of this present Life? *Let our Conversation therefore be in Heaven*, if you will; but let us not forget we are upon Earth. For if we do, we may be sure others will not. There will be always some, who have the Wisdom of the Serpent, to take Advantage of our Holy Slothfulness, and while we think we are laying up for ourselves Treasures in Heaven, amass to themselves the Riches of the Earth, which might

VOL. I. C have



**SERM.** have been possess'd, and employ'd by us in the necessary Works of Christian Charity, for the Relief of our needy Brethren. In a word, while those who have another World at Heart, employ their whole Time and Thoughts in Raptures of Seraphick Love, the Wicked will lay Snares to entrap the Innocent, and the State of Religion, and of the World in general, will be the worse for their particular Devotion.

I say not this to check the Love of God, which can never be enough commended. But I say it in Opposition to those Zealots, who place Religion in retiring from the World, and despising all Persons in it: Whereas a chearful and regular Obedience, in the more active Scenes of Life, is as much superior to this sullen Sanctity, as the Good of Mankind is a nobler View than one's own particular Interest or Advantage. A generous and beneficent Spirit seeks Occasions of doing good to others; whereas in this recluse and monastick State, our Virtues are purely negative. 'Tis the utmost Perfection of this Order of Men, not willingly to do Mischief to any one.

But, Secondly, as this Precept of the Apostle is not meant to prohibit all Attention to the Business of the World, so neither can it be supposed to exclude us from the Enjoyment of those innocent Delights, which Nature has pour'd out about us.

It cannot be denied, that at some certain Seasons, to mortify our corrupt Affections, or to humble ourselves before an offended God, it may be proper and even necessary to abstain from the Enjoyment of our lawful Pleasures. But it is a mean and unworthy Notion of the supreme Being, to suppose he takes delight in Misery. The contrary is not only deducible



cible from his Attributes, but so visible even in all SERM.  
 his Works, that nothing but the groundless Terrors III.  
 of the Superstitious, who thought him *altogether such*   
*a one as themselves*, could have induced them to enter-  
 tain that Thought. *The merciful and gracious Lord*  
*hath so done his marvellous Works, that they ought to be*  
*had in Remembrance.* And how can they be remem-  
 bred better, than by contemplating them with Plea-  
 sure and Complacence? It must needs be either  
 Guilt or Ignorance, that can cause us to survey the  
 Beauties of the Creation without being sensibly af-  
 fected. They were made to strike our Senses with  
 Delight; and if they have not this Effect, the De-  
 sign of Nature is defeated. It is for this Reason  
 they are ever tempting and soliciting us, and till we  
 can divest ourselves of all our Senses, which were  
 purposely adapted to the Enjoyment of them, we  
 cannot be indifferent or inattentive. No imaginable  
 Reason can be given, why they are form'd with so  
 much Symmetry and Order, but for the Delight and  
 Entertainment of *us Men, the Sovereigns of this lower*  
*World.* And indeed to behold them with a chearful  
 Heart, is in some Sort an Act of Gratitude. 'Tis  
 rejoicing in him *who made them*, as we cannot but  
 do with the most unfeigned Sincerity, when we con-  
 sider him as their great Author and Support. Who  
 can enumerate that Variety of Entertainments, which  
 lies scatter'd about the visible Creation? Or what  
 can we say to that preposterous Devotion, which  
 takes a Pride in beholding them with Indifference?  
 There is such a Thing as a religious Melancholy, a  
 certain peevish Solemnity of Temper, consisting in  
 an habitual Disposition to be out of Humour with  
 every thing on this side Heaven. You are to under-

SERM. stand the Person infected with this Distemper, to be  
 III. far gone towards another World, and to have such  
 violent Foretastes of the Joys of Heaven, as to have  
 no Relish for any Pleasure upon Earth. But surely  
 it must needs be a more religious, as well as a more  
 happy Temper, to be pleased as much as possible  
 with every thing. This is certainly no ways incon-  
 sistent with the harshest and severest Precepts of the  
 Gospel. We are commanded indeed *to take up our*  
*Cross*; but we are no where commanded to seek it  
 out: We are to bear all the Calamities, that fall to  
 our Share; but not to load ourselves with unnecessary  
 Evils. We are neither to decline, nor court Adver-  
 sity: If it is thrown into our Lap, we must bear it  
 patiently: If not, we may enjoy the Blessings of  
 Providence; provided it be done with Temper and  
 Moderation, with an humble Sense of our own Un-  
 worthiness, *and without forgetting the Hand that gave*  
*them*. And this leads me to consider in the

Third and last Place, That, so far as is consistent  
 with the necessary Business and the innocent Delights  
 of Life, it is no less our Interest, than our Duty, *to*  
*set our Affection on Things above*. And surely if any  
 thing in this World deserves our Love, much more  
 does the most bounteous Author of every thing that  
 is good and amiable. He gave us not only those  
 Objects of Delight, which affect us with such an ex-  
 quisite Pleasure, but likewise the very Capacity of  
 receiving that Pleasure, and the Disposition to be de-  
 lighted with it. *He therefore should be the principal,*  
*if not the sole Object of our Affection*; and because the  
 Passions are apt to follow, which ever way the  
 Senses lead them, and consequently 'tis not so easy  
 to place our Affections upon a spiritual and incorpo-  
 real

real Being, as upon one of the same Nature with SERMON  
III.  
ourselves, it would be well therefore, if we would  
endeavour to bring down this glorious Object to the  
Level of our own Capacities, or at least to raise our-  
selves to some faint Idea of his infinite Perfections,  
by surveying him with the Eye of Reason. By this  
means we shall discover, how much we have been  
obliged to his Goodness, and how much we depend  
upon his Power: How much Reason we have to  
praise him for Favours past, and to trust in him for  
those which are to come. Love and Joy, and Hope  
and Gratitude, and all the Tribe of the most exalted  
Passions, which can rise in the Heart of Man, will  
find Room to exert themselves on this single Object.  
How must the Imagination swell with the Idea of  
that great and awful Being, which *even the Heaven,  
and Heaven of Heavens, is not able to contain*: And  
how must it break out into Ecstasies of Thanksgiving,  
when we consider ourselves intitled, by the Blood of  
our Redeemer, to an *Inheritance incorruptible and un-  
defiled, reserved in those Heavens for us*! Where can  
we find a Subject for our Meditation upon the Sur-  
face of this earthly Globe, which deserves to be put  
in Competition with these great and sublime Medi-  
tations? How mean is Wealth and Honour, Birth,  
Title, Place or Power, nay how mean is human  
Wisdom itself, compar'd with these celestial Treas-  
ures! Thus saith the Lord: *Let not the wise Man  
glory in his Wisdom; neither let the mighty Man glory in  
his Might: Let not the rich Man glory in his Riches:  
But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he under-  
standeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which  
exercise loving Kindness, Judgment and Righteousness in  
the Earth. For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

SERM. But, lastly, another Reason why we should set  
 III. our Affections on things above, is, that we may be  
 superior to the little Casualties and Disasters that happen in this lower World. A Mind that is wholly bent upon Immortality, contracts all its Views and Wishes, with respect to the Concerns of this transient Scene, into a very narrow Compass. Fortune has no Power over it. Every Moment of *Pleasure* is enjoy'd; and every Moment of *Pain* is cheated away by the Prospect of a blessed Immortality. From a Heart so fortified as this, came that noble Resolution in the Prophet *Habakkuk*. *Altho' the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat, the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* Such is the Spirit of every true Christian, when he is tried in the Furnace of Affliction. The setting our Affections on things above, causes all Difficulties and Hardships to disappear. The Love of God is the vital Principle, which animates and gives Vigour to our Devotion. Without this, the outward Exercise of Religion will be not only a fruitless and unprofitable, but a very toilsom and uneasy Task. We see in the ordinary Concerns of Life, how the Principle of Love prevails. With how much Ease are all Difficulties surmounted, which oppose our Passage to what we earnestly desire! Who would not risk even Life itself for the sake of what he dearly loves? And on the contrary, how ill are all Offices perform'd, that are undertaken at first upon Compulsion, and executed with Unwillingness and Regret! In vain does Reason prompt us forward, if our Affections do not second and support



port it. And if they *do*, no Danger can discourage SERM.  
us, no Opposition baffle and repulse us. What else III.  
is the Reason, that so many holy Martyrs have,   
from time to time, with so much Chearfulness of  
Heart, suffer'd Death for the sake of Christ; while  
others, whose Affections were less inflamed, have  
deserted the common Duties of Christianity, as too  
rigorous, and too difficult to be borne? Whereas the  
Difficulty is not in the Duty itself, but in the Spirit  
of him, who is to practise it. And the Reason why  
so many Professors of Religion start back and shame  
their Calling, is, that their Hearts are not affected  
with a Sense of Gratitude, and *their Labour proceedeth  
not of Love.*

To conclude; since it is our Duty so to divide our  
Time betwixt this World and the next, as to be  
wanting to the Concerns of neither; let every one,  
after he has studied his Temper, set a Guard upon  
his own particular Frailty. I believe there is no  
great Reason to suspect, that any of us think too  
much of another World. However, if there be any  
one, who thinks he has set his Affections on things  
above, merely because he has withdrawn them from  
the Earth, let him carefully search and examine his  
own Heart, to see whether he does not mistake his  
own Sullenness and Moroseness, or his own Spleen  
and Ill-nature for Religion. If there be any who  
thinks himself only innocently chearful, let him take  
heed, lest his Gaiety of Heart insensibly withdraw  
him from the Thoughts of another World, and en-  
slave him to the Delights of this.

In general, let us all examine what particular Plea-  
sures upon Earth are most apt to engage our Affec-  
tions, and at what Seasons they are most apt to soli-



SERM. cit us. Against them let us employ all our Skill, that  
 III. they may not so command and engross our Thoughts,  
 as to make us negligent of the one thing needful.  
 With this Caution the Interests of both Worlds may  
 be united: We may set our Affections on another,  
 without losing the Conveniences of this, and we may  
 live with Chearfulness and Pleasure here, without  
 forfeiting our Inheritance hereafter.

*Now to God, &c.*





*The Necessity of well Husbanding  
our Time.*

A.

S E R M O N

Preached before the HOUSEHOLD.

P S A L M XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our Days, that we may  
apply our Hearts unto Wisdom.*



THE Use that I would make of these SERM.  
Words at present, is, to introduce a IV.  
Subject which may be profitably con-  
sidered, viz. The well husbanding and  
improving of our Time.

The Shortness and Uncertainty of  
human Life is a thing, that has been much complain-  
ed of: And therefore there is no need to go about to  
prove it, since we all own and lament the Truth of it.  
To persuade Men to make a proper Use of this Know-  
ledge, is indeed a much harder Task: And for this  
Cause it was that the Holy Psalmist, conscious of our

SERM. Weakness in this Respect, thought fit to apply to  
 IV. Heaven for the Cure of it, praying to God, that he  
 would *teach us so to number our Days, i. e.* so to consider and lay to Heart how short our Time is, *that we may apply our Hearts to the truest Wisdom*, by preparing for a better State. The way to do this (if we design to do it, and if we do not, we are certainly in a very dangerous Condition) is, to sit down and seriously consider with ourselves, in what Manner we have spent our Time, what Profit we have gained, what Losses we have suffered; what Improvement<sup>s</sup> we have made in Virtue, and what Progress in Vice, and in what Respects we are better or worse Christians, than we were when our Lives began. It is not very easy to point out the Particulars, of which this Enquiry should consist; these being as various and different from each other, as the Circumstances and Conditions of Men. One Man has met with Crosses and Disappointments, another with Prosperity and Success: One has been afflicted with Pain and Sickness, another has enjoy'd Health and Strength: One has been pining under Want and Poverty, another has been filled with Plenty: One has had many Opportunities to do good, another has had few or none: and in Proportion to the Difference of Mens Circumstances in these Respects, the Articles of their Enquiry will be somewhat different too. However, that we may not enter upon this necessary Work without some Kind of Method to direct us, I shall take upon me to lay down a few General Rules for our Conduct in this Respect, after having promised, that in all Enquiries of this Nature we must take with us these following Caution.

I. That

I. That *that* is really no Profit or Advantage, which SERM.  
sets us forward in the Affairs of this World, and at IV.  
the same time sets us backward in the Accounts we  
are to make at the Judgement-Seat of Christ. ~~~~~

II. That *that* is really no Loss, which is so only  
with respect to this World, provided it helps us for-  
ward in those Articles of Enquiry, which shall be  
made at the Great Day of Judgment.

III. That therefore in all our Business and Em-  
ployments, in all our Dealings and Transactions with  
each other, we ought to have an Eye to that final  
Hearing, which will make us happy or miserable for  
ever. And therefore

IV. That to abound with this World's Good, and  
at the same Time to be poor in Grace, is in Truth  
the worst Husbandry in the World, since all that ex-  
ceeds our own necessary Occasions, was given us for  
the sake of others, to enable us, by providing for the  
Relief of their Wants, to lay up for ourselves a Re-  
version of Happiness, which this World cannot give.

This being premised, I proceed to lay before you  
a few general Directions, by which we may be en-  
abled so to balance our Accounts, as to improve the  
Time to come to our spiritual Advantage, by look-  
ing back on what has happened in the past. The  
First is,

I. To compare the good Offices we have done,  
with the Opportunities we have had to do them. It  
is not the Good that is done by Us, compared with  
what is done by others, but compared with the Power  
and Ability we have to do it, that will justify us  
in the Sight of God. This we are taught by the Pa-  
rable of the Widow, whose Mite we are told was as  
well accepted, as the rich Offerings of her wealthy  
Neigh-

SERM. Neighbours. And indeed it would be no equitable

IV. or fair Proceeding to expect the same Improvement  
 from him, who has but few, as from him, who has  
 many Talents. This would be utterly inconsistent  
 with that Maxim of common Justice, which is urged  
 by our blessed Lord himself: That *to whomsoever much*  
*is given, of him much shall be required; and to whom*  
*Men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

But though all Men are not blessed with the same  
 Means and Opportunities, yet most Men have some  
 Power to do Good. And the less Power we have,  
 the more careful should we be not to lose any Occa-  
 sion of exerting it. For in Proportion to our Power,  
 be it more or less, we shall be expected to account  
 for the Use of it. Accordingly it was some of the  
 last Advice of a wise and good Father to his Son:  
*Be merciful after thy Power. If thou hast much, give*  
*plenteously; if thou hast little, do thy Diligence gladly to*  
*give of that little; for so gatherest thou thyself a good*  
*Reward in the Day of Necessity.*

It happens indeed to be the Case of some, (would  
 to God it were less common than it is!) to be so  
 humbled and afflicted in their outward Circumstances,  
 that they can only be the Objects of that Charity  
 and Compassion, which, if it had pleased God to bless  
 them with the good Things of this Life, they would  
 gladly have reached out to others. To these it may  
 be offered as just Matter of Consolation, that by  
 their indigent Condition they are exempted from the  
 Necessity of accounting for the Use of Riches. But  
 withal they must remember that there are many In-  
 stances of Duty, wherein the-poorest Man alive may  
 supply the Necessities, and administer to the Wants of  
 others. To feed the Hungry and to clothe the Naked;



to distribute among the Poor those Blessings and Con-  
 veniencies, which they want through the Affluence  
 of others, are, doubtless, very great and shining In-  
 stances; but they are by no means the only In-  
 stances of Compassion; nor are Riches the only Ta-  
 lents committed to our Care for the Exercise of Chri-  
 stian Charity. Who was ever in a poorer or more  
 mean Condition, than our Saviour Christ himself?  
 And yet who was ever more charitable than He?  
 Or who ever more abounded in those Offices of Com-  
 passion, by which he has commanded us to express  
 our Charity, and to testify our Love to others? The  
 Character which is given him by one of the Sacred  
 Writers, and the Description which is left by all of  
 them, is, that *he went about doing Good*, and that too  
 at a Time, when his Poverty and Distress gave Oc-  
 casion to that pathetic Complaint of his, *that*  
*the Foxes had Holes, and the Birds of the Air had*  
*Nests; But the Son of Man had not where to lay his*  
*Head*. What Riches had any of his Apostles, who  
 were chosen from some of the most mean Employ-  
 ments, and had as great a Share in the Sufferings  
 and Afflictions, as in the Virtues of their Lord and  
 Master? But as poor as they were, they never wanted  
 Means to express their compassionate Concern for  
 Men, by the most conspicuous Acts of Charity. *Sil-*  
*ver and Gold have I none*, says one of them: *But such*  
*as I have, I give thee; In the Name of Jesus Christ of*  
*Nazareth, rise up and walk*, Acts iii. 6.

These, it may be said, are great Instances of Cha-  
 rity; but they are the Work of a miraculous Power;  
 a Power, which Christ had by virtue of his divine  
 Nature, and his Apostles from the Spirit of God:  
 Nor can we be expected to do the Works that they  
 did,

SERM.  
 IV.  


SER. did, since we have not the same Power to perform them. It is true, we cannot. But is there then no other Way? have we never an Opportunity to admonish the Wicked, to instruct the Ignorant, or to comfort our afflicted Brethren? Can we save them no Trouble in their ordinary Concerns by taking a little Trouble on ourselves? Are there not many good Offices, that one may do another, without suffering the least Injury himself? What is it, that causes one to be esteemed a good, and another a bad Neighbour amongst us? Is it not the granting or denying those common Favours, which may be well spared without Damage to ourselves? If so, what Excuse can it be to say, we have no Riches to bestow on others, when we deny them, what we have to give? when we refuse to afford them that Comfort in Distress, which is all that our present Circumstances will allow? One would think the common Wants and Necessities of our Nature, from which none of us can pretend to be exempted, should knit us altogether in the Bands of Love, and dispose us to combine, if for no better Reason, yet at least for the Ease and Convenience we should find in promoting each other's Good. But where can we find a greater Want of Charity, than among those who stand most in need of it? As if the Hardships of Poverty were too little of themselves, some of those, who feel it, do but add to its Afflictions; grieving their Neighbours by their unfriendly Treatment, and themselves by their uncharitable Tempers. While these things are so, it is in vain for them to talk of the Good they would have done, if God's Providence had trusted them with the Management and Use of Riches. For as sure as they are envious and malicious in their  
Want

Want, they would have been insolent and unkind SERM.  
in Plenty : As sure as they now murmur at the Good IV.  
of others, they would then have been indifferent to   
their Distress. The same Principle would still have  
followed them through all Fortunes, and all Circum-  
stances in Life : And he that has so little Love and  
Benevolence in his Temper, so little Will and Inclina-  
tion to do Good, as to lose the few small Oppor-  
tunities he has, would have lost them, if they had  
been more and greater. The Reverse of our Sa-  
viour's Reasoning, will hold good with respect to  
him ; *He that has not been faithful over a few things,*  
*is not fit to be a Ruler over many things, nor shall he*  
*enter into the Joy of his Lord.*

To return therefore to the Rule I gave you : Since  
so many excellent things are spoken of Charity, since  
Charity is the Bond of Perfectness ; since the End of  
the Command is Charity ; the Way to know, whe-  
ther we are possess of this heavenly Virtue, is (as I  
said) to compare the good Offices we have done,  
with the Opportunities we have had to do them. To  
compare them with the Good that is done by others,  
is a false and uncertain Rule ; because we can nei-  
ther know what is done by others, nor if we did,  
should we be bound to follow them. *Our Example*  
*may as well be a Rule to them, as theirs can be a*  
*Rule to us ; and if neither we, nor they have an Eye*  
*to our own Power, but measure our Actions by the*  
*Practice of each other, in this Case the Blind will but*  
*lead the Blind, and both may fall into the Pit.* Whereas  
by comparing the good Offices we have done, with  
the Opportunities we have had to do them, we shall  
be able to see how our Charity has abounded, and  
in what Instances it has been defective : And may  
thereby

SERM. thereby be enabled so to regulate our Conduct, so to  
 IV. husband and improve our Talents, that when we are  
 called to give account of our Stewardship, we may  
 do it with Joy, and not with Grief. Thus much for  
 the first Rule, to keep our Accounts even, and to  
 prepare for the great Day of Judgment.

II. The next is, To compare the Mercies we  
 have receiv'd with the Returns we have made to  
 Heaven for them. Numberless are the Blessings,  
 which God's gracious Providence pours down among  
 the Sons of Men. Every Day and every Hour we  
 live, is a fresh Instance of his Goodness to us. To  
 him we are indebted for all the Blessings we receive  
 from the Exercise of our several Callings; for the pro-  
 sperous Success of our Projects and Designs, and for the  
 Fruits of our honest Labours. It is He, *who crowneth*  
*the Year with his Goodness, and whose Clouds drop Fatness:*  
*Who visiteth the Earth and blesseth it, yea and maketh it*  
*very plenteous: Who watereth her Furrows, and send-*  
*eth Rain into the little Valleys thereof; who maketh it*  
*soft with the Drops of Rain, and blesseth the Increase of*  
*it.* Nay it is He, who gives us that chearful Spirit,  
 without which his other Blessings would be lost to us.  
 Every Man, says Solomon, *to whom God hath given*  
*Riches and Wealth, and hath given him Power to eat*  
*thereof, and to take his Portion, and to rejoice in his La-*  
*bour, this also is the Gift of God.* So that to him we  
 are indebted both for the Blessings themselves, and  
 the Comfort and Delight they yield. To him there-  
 fore we should ascribe the Glory; to him we should  
 return the Thanks. This is the only Recompence  
 he requires for all the Instances of his Favour to us,  
 not as reflecting any Honour upon him, or adding  
 any Lustre to his infinite Perfections; but as the best  
 Tribute



Tribute we are able to pay, the only Acknowledg-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
ment we can make for his Goodness, and the only <sup>IV.</sup>  
Service, by which we can deserve the Continuance  
of his Favour to us. To know therefore, whether  
we have thus deserved it; we must look back up-  
on the Mercies we have received: Not only those  
general Mercies, which he dispenses to all Men pro-  
miscuously, but likewise those particular Instances  
of his Providence, in which we are more pecu-  
liarly concerned. Some signal Proofs of God's Fa-  
vour and Protection, some eminent Escapes from  
Danger, some great Deliverances from approaching  
Evils, every Year's Experience will afford: And he  
must needs be a very careless Observer of the Bene-  
fits conferred upon him, who cannot recollect ma-  
ny Instances of this Kind, that have happened to  
his own Person in particular. When therefore we  
have raised up these Thoughts in our Minds, the  
next thing to be considered is, what Acknowledg-  
ments we have made for those great and undeserved  
Mercies. If we find upon Enquiry, that we have lived  
like Men under a Sense of such infinite Obligations,  
God's Mercies are then Mercies indeed: in as much  
as they will tend not only to our present, but like-  
wise to our future Happiness. If not, it is time to  
make up our Accounts, and to pay our Arrears of  
Gratitude, by offering up at the Throne of Grace  
the small Recompense he requires us to make, even  
the Acknowledgments of a thankful Heart, and by  
steadfastly resolving, through the Help of *his* Grace  
*to serve and please him in Newness of Life*, as long as  
we have our Being upon Earth. And that this may  
be done with the better Prospect of Success, the next  
Rule I shall offer, is this:

III. That



SERM. III. That we carefully compare the Sins we have committed, with the Temptations, by which we were seduced. We can see, when the Power of a Temptation is over, when the Pleasure is vanished, and the Passion gratified, the true Value both of Vice and Virtue; which perhaps we could not, while we were blinded by our Interest, or intoxicated with the Love of Pleasure. The way therefore to know what Enjoyment we may expect from the Commission of any Sin hereafter, is, to consider what Comfort or Satisfaction we receive from a Sin that is already past; what Recompence it has made us for the Loss of our Innocence, and for the Forfeiture of God's Favour to us. If Interest was the Motive, let us consider, what Benefit we have found in the Possession of ill-gotten Wealth; whether we are ever the happier or more contented Men, for any of our unlawful Gains; whether they have not wasted by insensible Degrees, without doing us any real Service; or if not, whether we have never any painful Thoughts from the Sense we have, that they are none of ours, but ought to be restored to others. If we have no remorse, our Case is dangerous; and if we have, we *must* be sensible how little it is worth while, to forfeit that Innocence and Integrity of Heart, which is a perpetual Spring of Comfort, for the sake of that, which, when we come to prove it, is but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit. For *what will it profit a Man, to gain the whole World, if he loses his own Quiet and Rest?* Much less will it profit him, if he loses his Soul by it; the worst Loss that he can possibly sustain. On the other hand, if Pleasure has been our Aim, if it is for That, that we have lost our Innocence, let us sit down and compute our Gains. *What Fruit had*

*we then in these Things, whereof we are now ashamed?* SERM.

What was all we got by it, even in the Height of IV.  
our Enjoyment, but a transient and short Delight? W

And what now remains of it, but Remorse of Conscience, and the sad Remembrance, that our Guilt still lives, though the Pleasure be quite gone for ever? Such will be the Pleasure which is yet to come; and which now tempts us with the most inviting Fondness. That also will be past for ever. When we think on these things, who would ever hearken to the Suggestions of either Interest or Pleasure, seducing us to Sin and Misery; who would ever submit to part with an Advantage, for any Thing which he has found, upon balancing the Account, to be no fair and just Equivalent?

Whilst we are upon this Head, we may consider further, what Temptations have been most apt to beguile us; and These, when we are satisfied of their Force and Influence, we should be very careful for the future to avoid; in like manner as a prudent and frugal Manager will avoid all Places, all Companies and Occasions, which he has frequently found, by examining his Accounts, have led him to an unnecessary Expence.

By this Rule, when we have fortified and secured our Hearts, and armed them against the Power of Temptation, we may proceed to the fourth and last Rule I shall offer, *viz.*

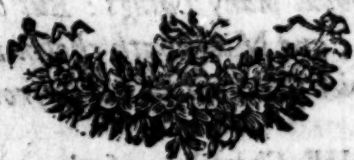
IV. To compare the Vows and Resolutions we have made, with their actual Performance and Effect. The worst of us, no doubt, have at some Time or other had Thoughts of forsaking our Sins. If they were only general, without fixing any Time, what Reason have we to think, we shall ever do more, than  
repeat

SERM. repeat the same general Resolutions? If we have fixed a Time, and that Time is past, what Advances have we made in Virtue? Do we steadily hold out, in pursuance of our Vow, against the Force of all Temptations that assail us? If so, we have obtained a Victory indeed; and happy that Servant, *whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing*. If not, we have Reason to suspect our Hearts, and to guard them with more Diligence for the future. For if one Resolution has been broken through, what Hope, that we shall keep another? It is a Sign there is some perverse and wicked Principle, which lies lurking at the Bottom of our Hearts, which the longer we indulge, the more Power it will gain, and the more difficult it will be to conquer it.

To conclude: We are hitherto preserved by the good Providence of God, to consider and amend our Ways. The Day of Grace is as yet vouchsafed to us; tho' many of those with whom we have conversed, are now laid in the lowest Pit, in the Place of Darkness, and in the Deep. *Their Sentence is fixt for ever: For there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wisdom, nor Repentance, nor Mercy in the Grave whither they are gone: Their Love also, and their Hatred, and their Envy is now perished; neither have they any more a Portion for ever in any thing that is done under the Sun.* How long any of us may survive, we know not: But this we know, that we must fall at last, and that the Time we have to live, whether long or short, is as nothing with respect to that Eternity which is to come, and for which therefore we should be constantly preparing, lest Day succeed Day, and Year succeed Year, and Death overtake us in the same slothful State, resolving to repent without beginning,

ginning, or beginning without ever finishing. Where-SERM.  
fore, my beloved Brethren, *Let us exhort one another* IV.  
*daily, while it is called to Day, lest any of us be hardened*  
*through the Deceitfulness of Sin:* And may God, of his  
great Mercy, dispose our Hearts to consider our real  
Interest, and so teach us to number our Days, that  
we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom.

*Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be  
ascribed all Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty and  
Dominion, both now, henceforth, and for ever-  
more.*





*The one Thing needful.*

A

# S E R M O N

Preached before the D U K E.

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LUKE X. 41, 42.

*And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many Things: But one Thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good Part, which shall not be taken from her.*

SERM.  
V.



THE Characters of the two Persons that are mentioned in my Text, may be gathered from the Circumstances related of them. The Story is this. Our Saviour, it seems, in the Course of his Travels from one Place to another, had just entered into a Village, which was called *Bethany*, where he was courteously received and entertained, in the House of a Woman, whose Name was *Martha*. This *Martha* had a Sister, whose Name

was





was *Mary*; the same Person, of whom we are told in the Gospel of St. *John*, that having purchased a Box of Ointment of Spikenard, very precious, she anointed the Feet of *Jesus* with it, and wiped them with her own Hair. Our Saviour, who never lost an Opportunity to do Good, instead of attending to his own Refreshment, as it was natural at such a Time to do, was discoursing to his Disciples, and entertaining them, no doubt, with something, which was well worth their Hearing. *Mary* perceived this, and being willing to improve by the Instruction of so good a Teacher, sat down at his Feet, and heard him. *Martha* in the mean time, who perhaps was as well pleased with this Visit which her Lord had made her, was expressing her Respect to him in a different Way, by preparing things proper to entertain him; and missing her Sister, whose Help she expected, and which could never be more necessary, than it was then, she interrupts our Saviour in the midst of his Discourse, with what she thought a very reasonable Complaint. *Lord, dost thou not care, that my Sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore, that she help me.* To which our Saviour replies in my Text, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things; But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good Part, which shall not be taken away from her.* In which Words he does not seem directly to disapprove of the Part which *Martha* chose. For some body must have done what *Martha* did, or our Saviour must have wanted that necessary Refreshment, for the sake of which he came. Nor is his Answer to be understood, as respecting only what had happened at that time in particular, but as extending to the Characters of the two Persons here mentioned, with respect to their whole

SERM. whole Conduct and Behaviour. *Martha* was a Person  
 V. of an active Temper, diligent and industrious in the  
 Management of her Affairs, and what we call a very  
 prudent Woman. *Mary*, on the other hand, was less  
 addicted to Business, and more given to Contempla-  
 tion and Prayer, to the hearing of God's Word, and  
 to such Acts of Piety, as are more apt to recommend  
 us to the Favour of God, than the good Opinion and  
 Esteem of Men. Something like this may easily be  
 collected from the little, that is said of them in some  
 other Places; but especially from the Answer, which  
 our Saviour here makes, and which seems to have re-  
 spect to the whole Government of their Lives, in which  
 we may suppose there was as much Difference at other  
 Times, as in this Instance there appears to be. The  
 Meaning therefore of the Words is this, *Martha,*  
*Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many Things,*  
*i. e.* I perceive thou art very much concerned about  
 the Management of thy worldly Business. I see, that  
 in this, and I know, that in other Instances, thou art  
 apt to be full of Care: for which I do not blame thee;  
 but I would not have thee think, that this ought to  
 be thy only Study; that the Cares of this World  
 should employ thy whole Thoughts, and shut out all  
 other Business. *For one thing is needful;* one thing is still  
 wanting: I need not tell thee, what it is I mean:  
 For *Mary* hath chosen it; and a good Part it is; and  
*it shall not be taken away from her,* i. e. She shall not  
 be disturbed in the Exercise of it now, on Account of  
 this Complaint of thine; nor indeed shall she ever  
 lose it. It is on this Account, as well as on many  
 others, a much better Part, than what thou hast cho-  
 sen, inasmuch as it will never fail her. It is a Part,  
 which

which can never be unseasonable, or unnecessary; SERM.  
nor shall she ever be disappointed in it. V.

Having thus shewn, what I take to be the Meaning of the Words, I shall now enter on the Doctrine contained in them.

The first thing to be observed, is the Character of *Martha*, and the Judgment, which our Saviour passes thereupon; in which, as I said, he does not blame her for her Care in the Management of her worldly Business, much less for her Diligence in attending upon him, and preparing an Entertainment for him; but for making such things the whole Business of her Life, being bent upon them, and swallowed up in them, to that Degree, that she could not give a fit Attention to those things which concerned her Soul. And this, I believe, is a pretty common Case: For which Reason I shall consider it more particularly.

First then, it is certain, there is a necessary Attention to the Management of our worldly Business, which is so far from deserving Censure, that it is a very commendable and useful Quality; a Duty, which we owe to ourselves in particular, and to the Families, to which we severally belong. Masters and Mistresses have an Interest in so doing; and so indeed have Children, when they have Sense enough to know, that their Happiness and Welfare depend upon their Parents, and that their Parents seldom suffer in any worldly Matter, but they also must needs suffer with them. Servants indeed have no Interest of their own, or at least but few of them, though some perhaps have, in the Success of their Master's Business. But it is their Duty however, if that has any Weight with them, to manage every thing with as much Care for the Benefit of their Master, as if it were their own personal Concern.

SERM. This they are bound in strict Justice to perform; and  
 V. without this they do not answer their Master's Expectation; they do not perform that Covenant or Agreement, which is always supposed, if not expressly mentioned, in the Contract which is made between them.

Much might be said, if my Subject would admit of it, to enforce the Practice of this Care and Diligence, from many Texts of Scripture, that recommend it; but it is my Business now, to shew the Danger of abusing it; for the best things, we know, are liable to be abused, and among the rest this Duty in particular.

Be pleased then to observe the Censure, which is here cast upon One, who was by no Means defective in this Duty, but was rather too careful to perform it. She rather over-did it, being so far from shunning any Business, that it was her Duty to attend, that she rather perplex'd and disturb'd her Thoughts with more than was needful for her. The Care of her Affairs was a perfect Trouble and Fatigue to her; allowing no Rest or Interruption from them, but perpetually distracting her with their Number and Variety, and oppressing her with their constant Weight. Not that she was addicted, as we can find, to Avarice: On the contrary, she seems to have been liberal enough in dispensing what she had, as Occasion offered, in charitable and pious Uses. Such was the Reception of our Blessed Saviour, which is remembered in this Chapter to her Advantage, and which seems to have been the Foundation of that Friendship to the two Sisters, which moved him, as we are told in the Gospel of St. John, to raise their Brother, *Lazarus* from the Dead.



*The one Thing needful.*

51

The Character of *Martha* is therefore the Character of a provident and frugal Woman, neither covetous in Saving, nor extravagant in Spending, but sensible withal, how very necessary it is to attend her Business, and look after her Affairs, which disposes her sometimes to be too anxious and solicitous, too much troubled and concern'd about them. This is a Character which one would not take to be a bad one, the last Part of it being all that can be thought so. But our Saviour, you see, was so dissatisfied with this, that in the Height of her Pains and Care to please him, he takes upon him to reprove her for it. *Martha, Martha, Thou art careful and troubled about many Things, but one Thing is needful.* In one Respect she was more careful than she should be, but this caused her to be too negligent in another; which happened to be a Point of such vast Importance, that no other Kind of Diligence could excuse it. What this Point is, we shall presently observe. In the mean time, let us consider, if a Woman of this Character could deserve to be so censured and reprov'd, what must be the Case of many other Persons, who fall short of this Character, defective as it is, and who are not so good as *Martha*? Some People are quite careless and improvident in their Affairs, and for want of that Diligence, with which she abounded, do wantonly throw away in the Service of their Lusts, what ought to be preserv'd for their own comfortable Subsistence, or the Relief of their poor Brethren in Distress. Others go beyond her in that Part of her Character, which our Saviour here justly reprehends, setting their Hearts so much upon worldly Treasures, and taking so much Pleasure in them, that they cannot be persuad'd to part with what they might, for the Benefit of those that want



SERM. it. These People may be told, that to put them in  
 V. such a State, as our Saviour recommends to *Martha*,  
 more things than one are needful. The former must  
 be taught that Care and Diligence, which is necessary  
 to be employed in their worldly Business; and the  
 Latter must part with that immoderate Affection,  
 which they bear to their worldly Riches and Posses-  
 sions, before they can arrive at that low Degree of  
 Virtue, of which the Person, we now speak of, was  
 possess. When once they have done this, they have  
 gained a great Point, but still they must be told, *there*  
*is one Thing needful; a Thing*, that is of infinite more  
 Weight and Moment, than all that they can do be-  
 sides. And that is the Part which *Mary* chose.  
*Mary has chosen that good Part, which shall not be*  
*taken away from her.*

And now we enter upon another kind of Charac-  
 ter; the Character of One, who, by all that is said  
 of her, appears to have had but very small Regard  
 to the things we have been now considering. *Mary*  
 was a Woman of a quite different Spirit, she seems  
 to have had but very little of this World, but a great  
 deal of the next about her. For which Reason, her  
 Example, with our Saviour's Approbation, express  
 in these Words, which make a Part of my Text,  
 has been urged by some, as a Pattern of that recluse  
 and monastick State of Life, which is practised in  
 the Church of *Rome*. But this is a Mistake. For if it  
 be supposed, that this holy Person was actually en-  
 gaged in such a State of Life as this, it is enough to  
 answer, that such a State of Life had never at that  
 Time been profess'd by any, and that certainly she  
 could not belong to any Order, which was not at  
 that Time in being. If it be only meant, that her  
 Frame of Mind was fitted to such a State of Life,  
 and

and that therefore it is probable, if there had been SERM  
any Order, any Institution, or Society of this Kind, V.  
in which she might have been admitted, she would   
have used the Opportunity, and devoted herself to  
it; the Answer is, first, This is more than we know;  
secondly, If we did know it, it cannot be inferred  
from any thing that is said in the Text before us,  
that our Saviour would have liked her Choice; for  
he certainly speaks of a very different Thing; a  
Thing which was consistent with the most active Life,  
and which therefore he recommends as the only thing  
wanting to one, that was engaged in a Life of Care  
and Trouble; not expecting her to retire and leave  
the World, but to live piously and devoutly in it.  
It may likewise be observed, that the Example of  
*Mary*, which our Saviour recommends to her Sister's  
Notice, as worthy to be copied by her, is the Ex-  
ample of one, who lived as much in the World, as  
her more active and busy Sister; tho' one of them,  
on this great and extraordinary Occasion, had left  
the other to do every thing by herself. If this had  
not been so, there had been no room for the Com-  
plaint, which is made by one Sister of the other;  
why should *Martha* think it hard to be forsaken by  
her Sister, if it was no more than her constant Cu-  
stom so to do? if she was wholly given up to a Life  
of Piety and Devotion, and had quitted all worldly  
Business? The Preference therefore, which is here  
given to *Mary*, cannot properly be understood as any  
Ground or Foundation for preferring such a State of  
Privacy and Retirement, to an active and busy Life;  
since our Saviour, it is plain in the Words before us,  
had no Design to discourse of either. His Opinion  
of that Matter may be gathered from his Practice,  
from which it appears, that he preferred the latter,

SERM. tho' he sometimes used the former: he retired sometimes from the Multitude that was about him, from the Company of his Disciples, and the great Work of Teaching, that he might have Leisure for a little while to lift up his Thoughts to the Place from whence he came. But his Time, for the most part, was employed in Publick; the chief Business of his Life was to go about, *and do Good*. And surely to be shut up, and sequestred from the World, to shun all Opportunities of doing Good to others, can never be the way to follow his Example: It can never, to be sure, be *the one thing needful*, which our Saviour here labours to recommend. What then may we suppose to be the Meaning of these Words? What was it, that *Mary* was commended for having chosen, and *Martha* is reprov'd for wanting? I answer in one Word, it was Piety. It was a Sense of Religion, a true Spirit of Devotion, a Desire to recommend herself to the Favour of God, and to be graciously accepted by him. This was a Thing, which by one of the Sisters in the great Hurry of her worldly Business was forgot, but remembred by the other, who was never better pleased, than with such an Opportunity, as was now offered to her, to improve in Virtue, and be instructed in her Duty from the Mouth of so Divine a Teacher. This was what moved her to steal a little Time from a Business, in which doubtless she might well have been employed, thinking perhaps that her more careful Sister might at that Time have made a shift without her; or perhaps designing to divide her Time in such a Manner between her Sister and her Guest, as not to be quite useless and unprofitable to the One, nor lose the Benefit she expected from the Other: But whatever were her Thoughts, for what Reason soever she hold herself

herself excused from attending upon her Sister, her SERM.  
Intention was so good, her Piety so great, her Desire V.  
to be instructed was so much to be commended, that  
our Saviour, who knew her Heart, took Occasion  
to propose her as a Pattern to her Sister; one Thing  
you want, and your Sister has it, and therefore to  
her Example I refer you.

Thus have we seen, what the one Thing is, which  
our Saviour found *Martha* wanted. It is a Spirit of  
Devotion, a true Sense of Religion, which many  
Men want, who, notwithstanding that, are esteemed  
very upright Men: and so they may be between  
Man and Man: They may be just in their Dealings,  
they may be temperate and sober, they may give no  
Offence, they may be diligent in their Business; and  
yet in the Sight of God they may be far from being  
upright, for want of this *one Thing needful*. It has  
been said, that the best Actions that were ever done  
by any Heathens, deserve no better Name, than that  
of *splendid Sins*. What shall we say then of the  
seemingly good Actions of those Christians, who are  
destitute of that Christian Principle, from which every  
Christian Virtue proceeds? We will not call them  
Sins, for that may be thought hard: but surely they  
are unavailing Virtues. And is it not great Pity,  
that good Actions should be lost, for want of a good  
Principle to recommend them? and that after we  
have taken Pains to live soberly and righteously, we  
should lose our Reward, and be deceived at last, for  
want of living godly too? Yet how many Men are  
there, who have outwardly no Fault, and inwardly  
no Sense of Virtue! who are very regular and order-  
ly in the Discharge of all Duties, except that which  
they owe to God! That, which is not only the most  
necessary of all Duties, but that also without which



SERM. the Performance of all Duties, is no better than Formality and Pretence? For if we do not love God, and study to please him, we have in Truth no Religion in us: if our Righteousness proceeds from any worldly Motive, if we propose any other Reward but that which he has promised, and allow'd us to pursue, it is not Righteousness, it is Falshood and Hypocrisy; it wants the great Requisite, the one thing necessary to make it acceptable and well pleasing to God. Yet those, who are usually called moral Men; those who do their Duty to themselves and others, upon a Principle of Convenience, a Principle of Interest, a Principle of Decency, or any other Principle but that, which, as I said, is the true genuine Christian Principle, have a very hard Work to do. They labour as much, and take as much Pains, as, if it were employ'd in a better-Manner, would certainly recommend them to the Favour of God, and entitle them to everlasting Life. Nay indeed they take more; for it is a much harder Task to perform such Actions without the Love of God, than it would be to perform them with it. Nay harder, than it would be to obtain the Love of God, and to furnish their Minds with such a Spirit of Religion, as would render their whole Duty easy. That therefore all those, who are possess'd of this Virtue, may be the more inclined to keep it, to fix it in their Hearts, and to exert it in their Lives, and by all means to cherish and promote it, I shall briefly propose one Motive to recommend it, suggested in the last Words of my Text. *Mary* hath chosen that good Part, that shall not be taken away from her. That it is a good Part, you have heard; to which I shall now add, that it shall not be taken from us.

This



This can be said of no other thing, that Men are SERM.  
apt to make the Object of their Wishes. Nothing V.  
in this World that Men pursue, no earthly Blessing   
of whatever Kind it be, is so permanent and lasting,  
so fixt and certain, but in some Sense or other it may  
be taken from us. But of true Religion and the  
Love of God, the good Part which *Mary* chose, we  
cannot be deprived, we can never lose it, it can ne-  
ver be stolen, it can never be forced from us; if  
we do not wilfully part with it, we are sure to possess  
it, and it is sure to be a Blessing to us. Nothing  
else we value, can be so relied on: For whether it  
be Friends, they shall fail; whether it be Pleasure,  
that shall cease; whether it be Riches, they shall  
vanish away. And even while we keep them, there  
are Times and Seasons, when they can do us no  
real Service, and that too, when we stand most in  
need of them. How vain is it to talk to a sick Man  
of Friends! How little is he dispos'd to hear of Plea-  
sure! What Comfort can his Wealth afford him!  
All these he would gladly barter and exchange, *per-*  
*haps for one Moment's Ease*; certainly for a Time\* to  
recover his Strength, to recollect the scattered Powers  
and Capacities of his Soul, *before he go hence and be*  
*no more seen.* A little Time to make his Peace with  
God, to arm himself with Strength and Courage to  
meet Death, is to such a Man a thing of more Worth  
and Value, than all he can possess besides. And  
what, but Religion, can enable him to do this?  
What else dispose him with an undaunted Heart, to  
deliver himself up to that King of Terrors, to be  
transported by him to the great World of Spirits,  
which are waiting for their final Doom? Religion  
will do this: and after this, Religion will for ever  
be our Pleasure and Delight: It will be our chief

SER. M. Happiness in the other World, as it is now our chief  
V. Interest in this.

Thus we see in what Sense it is here said of Religion, that it shall not be taken away from us. It shall never fail us, it shall not, like those which are called worldly Goods, be removed from us by any Accident or Disaster. It does not depend upon any Change of Fortune; nor is it liable to be impaired by Age. It cannot be corrupted by Moth or Rust, neither can Thieves break through and steal it. It is not in another Respect like the Goods of Fortune, which at some certain Seasons are improper to be enjoyed, and in some Circumstances are quite useless to us. There is no Time when Religion may not properly be enjoyed; there are no Circumstances that destroy the Use of it. When other Comforts are most apt to fail us, it is then in its greatest Vigour. It rises in Proportion to our Exigencies and Wants, and the more we are afflicted and forsaken by the World, the more ready it is to revive and cheer us. In all Circumstances and Conditions, in Sickness and in Health, in Prosperity and Distress, it is our safest Guide, our best Companion, our truest Friend, our only Security from the Fear of Death, and when it comes, our only Comfort and Support. Nay, it will follow us to the Grave, it will rise with us at the Day of Judgment, it will recommend us to the Favour and Mercy of our Judge, and ascend with us to a State of Glory.

One Way there is, and there is but one, by which we can ever lose it, and that is, by neglecting it, which too many do, even after they have taken some Pains to gain it, and have felt its blessed Influence on their Hearts. Good Men have sometimes their Fits of Sloth, which betray them into Sin and Folly:

Folly : to prevent which, the same Care which *Martha* used in the Management of her worldly Business, is necessary to be applied to our spiritual Concerns, if we expect to persevere unto the End. Let those therefore, who are possess of this one thing necessary, take heed that they do not lose it; and let those who have it not, pray to God to give it, and use their best Care to gain it. And may God of his great Mercy give us all Grace to consider it as the best and most valuable Possession we can gain, and the most worthy of our Care in keeping; that we may set a just Value on the Things of the next World, and no more than a just Value on the Things of this.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*





*Mysteries no real Objections to the  
Truth of Christianity.*

A

S E R M O N

On DEUT. xxix. 29.

*The secret Things belong unto the Lord our  
God. But the Things which are revealed,  
belong unto us, and to our Children for ever,  
that we may do all the Words of this Law.*

SERM.  
VI.



AMONG the several Artifices, by which the Enemies of our Faith have attempted to destroy the Credit of Reveal'd Religion, that which they have practised with the greatest Success is, the representing it as an Enemy to our Reason. A Charge, which, if it could be supported with as much Truth and Justice, as it is sometimes with Confidence asserted, must have its Weight, not only upon the ignorant and unwary, but likewise upon the wisest and most considerate Part of Mankind. For whatever is plainly contradictory to our Reason, can never be the Object of our Faith. And whatever Religion would obtrude such Doctrines upon



upon its Professors, must be a false or corrupt Religion. SERM.  
And thus far we may agree with our Adversaries: VI.  
But then it is our Duty, on the other hand, in a Mat- ~  
ter of so much Consequence to our Salvation, to take  
heed how we reject a Doctrine, as plainly contradic-  
tory to our Reason, till we have thoroughly tried and  
examined it, and that, not only with such a delibe-  
rate Caution, as the Importance of the thing deserves,  
but likewise with all that Diffidence and Humility,  
which becomes Creatures of such limited Capacities.  
There are many things utterly unconceivable, which  
nevertheless, upon a strict Enquiry, will be found not  
to be against Reason, but above it. This we are will-  
ing enough to acknowledge in general, tho' in parti-  
cular Instances we are too apt to forget it. Which of  
us will not readily confess, that our Knowledge is  
but finite? And yet, when we come to use it, we be-  
have, as if we thought it infinite. Known unto us  
are all God's Counsels from the Foundation of the  
World. We arraign and acquit his Providence, as best  
suits with our own Schemes of Government, and the  
secret Things which belong to him, we explain in so  
clear a Manner, that they seem to be no Secrets at all  
to us! It is a Reflection, we think, upon our Under-  
standings, not to be able to give some Account of  
every thing. Solutions, Subtleties and Distinctions  
are found out to palliate our Ignorance, and rather  
than renounce one favourite Error, we intrench our-  
selves within a thousand others.

To check this exorbitant Curiosity, this Pride of  
human Reason, was the Design of *Moses* in my Text,  
when, after having instructed his Followers in the great  
Duties of their Religion, and (as he terms it) *set Life*  
*and Death before them*, he proceeds to inform them in  
the Words of my Text, that if there was any thing  
in



**SER.M.** in the Revelation then delivered to them, which they  
**VI** did not fully and perfectly comprehend; or if any  
 Question should be moved hereafter, which for want  
 of farther Knowledge they were not able to resolve,  
 they should content themselves with the Light that  
 he had given them: For that there were some things,  
 which they must not expect to understand: *The secret  
 things belong unto the Lord our God.* After this, that  
 they might the more readily acquiesce in that Share of  
 Knowledge which was imparted to them, he proceeds  
 in the next Place to acquaint them with the Use of it:  
*But those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and  
 to our Children for ever, that we may do all the Words of  
 this Law.*

Now because a Spirit of Scepticism and Infidelity  
 is, at least, as common in our Days, as in his; there  
 being a Set of unbelieving Disputants, who will ad-  
 mit nothing without the Evidence of Demonstration,  
 unless it be an Error of their own inventing; because  
 also the great Mysteries of our Religion were never  
 more rudely handled, nor the moral Part of it less  
 practised, than at present; I propose for these Reasons  
 in the following Discourse to insist upon these four  
 Particulars.

First, That the Difficulty, or indeed the utter Im-  
 possibility of conceiving the sacred Mysteries of our  
 Faith, is no just Objection to the Truth of them.

Secondly, That in Matters so far beyond the Reach  
 of our Capacities, it is not only a needless, but a dan-  
 gerous Presumption, to be too curious and inquisitive  
 concerning them.

Thirdly, That there are other Matters of far greater  
 Consequence, sufficient to employ our Meditation,  
 and which it is our Duty to study and examine. But,

Fourthly

Fourthly and lastly, That this, as well as all our other Knowledge, will be utterly lost and useless, unless it has an Influence upon our Lives and Manners, the sole End and Design of God's revealing his Will to us being, as it is express in my Text, *that we may do all the Words of this Law.*

SERM.  
VI.

These Propositions I shall consider briefly in their Order.

And First, the Difficulty, or indeed the utter Impossibility of conceiving the sacred Mysteries of our Faith, is no just Objection to the Truth of them.

I say this upon a Supposition, that the Grounds of our Religion are sufficient; that it has been confirm'd by Signs and Wonders, and attested by all the outward Circumstances of Credibility, that can be expected in a Revelation from God; that its practical Doctrines are unexceptionable, and worthy of their divine Original; and that there is no other Reason to dispute the Truth of it, but the Mysteries which it requires us to believe. In this Case, I say, however it may mortify our Pride to submit to Doctrines, which we do not fully comprehend, yet if they are not absolutely contradictory to our Reason, we ought not to dispute the Truth of them. For after all our boasted Excellencies, what is there, that we *do* fully comprehend? Is there any thing in the whole Compass of Nature, which, if we would pursue our Enquiries to the utmost, it would not puzzle the wisest of us to explain? The most ordinary and common Objects of our Senses, if we would search into their secret Qualities, are as mysterious as any Article of our Faith. The whole Creation is full of Wonders, were it not that they grow common and familiar to us, before we are able to consider them, as we ought. Their Existence we never doubt of, because we see and perceive

SERM. VI.  ceive that they exist. But had we not the Demonstration of our Senses, Reason would never help us to the Discovery. And is it any Wonder then, that our Reason should fail us, where our Senses cannot possibly exert themselves? If the material World is too glorious for our Comprehension, how should we understand the World of Spirits? It is a wild and wanton Curiosity to expect it, which if God Almighty should be pleased to gratify, new Difficulties would still arise to us, and all the additional Knowledge we had gain'd, would but lend us Light to be more sceptical and inquisitive.

The Truth is, if there were not some Difficulties in our Religion, there could be no such thing as Faith; it would be lost and swallow'd up in Knowledge. All that we have to do, when an Article is proposed to us, is to consider, whether it be the proper Object of our Reason. If not, however true in itself, it must needs be to us mysterious. And to reject any Doctrine on that Score only, is to set up our own shallow Judgments, as the Standard of all Truth and Possibility; 'tis to claim to ourselves a Knowledge no less than infinite, to prescribe Bounds to Omnipotence itself, and say; *Thus far shalt thou come, and no further.* Better would it become us to cast down Imaginations, and every high Thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ; and however necessary we may find it, in Matters within the Compass of our Reason, to guard against Artifice and Imposture, by insisting upon her Supremacy, yet in Subjects, which are manifestly too great for her Comprehension, patiently to acquiesce in the Revelation which God has made to us, and take his Word for the Truth of them. I will explain what I mean, by an Instance. If any Body should

should take it in his Head to persuade me, that a Piece SERM.  
of common Bread or Wafer is, in a strict and literal VI.  
Sense, the whole and perfect Body of our Lord *Jesus*  
*Christ*: and not only so, but that another Piece of  
Bread is, at the same time, the same whole and per-  
fect Body, and this, tho' my Reason tells me by the  
Information of my Senses, that it is no more than  
common Bread; I can never believe such monstrous  
Contradictions, whatever Arguments may be pro-  
duced to prove them. So again, if he should endeavour  
to persuade me, that God is not just and good, or  
deny any of his moral Attributes and Perfections, I  
should still find the same Difficulty to believe him.  
Because, tho' God is not the Object of my Senses,  
yet the same Arguments and Deductions of Reason,  
that assure me there is a God, assure me likewise, that  
he has all possible Perfections. But if he should pro-  
ceed to inform me further, that in the Unity of this  
Godhead, there are three Persons, here my Reason  
would be utterly at a Stand. I know, that in corpo-  
real Beings, such as Man, an Union of this Kind  
would be impossible: But I am so little acquainted  
with the Nature of immaterial Substances, and so  
far from understanding the Manner of their Exist-  
ing, that for ought I know, it may be so: And there-  
fore, if I have Reason to believe that God has re-  
vealed it, from thenceforth I am sure it is so. The  
same may be said of all the other Mysteries of our  
Faith. The Difficulty is not in the Nature of the  
Thing, but the Defect of our own Ideas: And as it  
is a Sign of mere Sottishness and Stupidity, to believe  
any thing which contradicts our Reason; so is it an  
Instance of great Pride and Contumacy, to dispute  
the Truth of any thing, which is above it.

And



SERM. And for this Reason it was, that I observed in the  
 VI. second Place,

II. That in Matters, so far beyond the reach of our Capacities, it is not only a needless, but a dangerous Presumption, to be too curious and inquisitive concerning them.

That it is needless, appears from the Difficulty of understanding them: And that, it is dangerous, the many Heresies and Errors, which have sprung up in the Christian Church, may furnish us with abundant Evidence. There is a sort of half-read Smatterers in Philosophy, who have just Sense enough to raise Doubts and Scruples, but not enough to clear them up. It is the Nature, you know, of half-witted People to be very jealous and suspicious. They spare no Pains to shew you, that they will not be overreach'd in any thing; and the Result of all this Caution is, that, with a great deal of Shrewdness and Sagacity, they fare worse than those who pretend to neither. The Case is much the same with the half-learned too. They stand aloof, if you offer to instruct them, and are resolved not to be cheated into the Belief of any thing. They stand upon the hardest Terms imaginable, and because it is a Disparagement to take any thing upon Trust, they will admit nothing that is not levell'd to their Capacities. They have read enough to suspect every thing they read, and rather than be drawn in to believe too much, they take care to believe nothing at all. It is pity, the indiscreet and hasty Zeal of some pious and well-meaning Men has attempted to defeat these invincible Antagonists, by answering their little Cavils and Objections. It is one of the least of all Advantages to the Interests of Religion to shew, that its Adversaries are stupid and absurd. It lies upon *them* to prove,



prove, that the Doctrines we teach are impossible. SERM.  
 Till then we may be fairly excused, if we do not VI.  
 leave our *own* Borders naked and defenceless, to   
 make unnecessary Inroads upon *them*. It is incredible,  
 what an Advantage the Enemies of our Faith have  
 gained from this our spiritual Knight-Errantry: This  
 Humour of encountering all the Errors and Absurdities,  
 all the mis-begotten Monsters and Chimeras that were  
 ever hatch'd by a heated Imagination in the Brains of  
 conceited Infidels. How often have these abortive  
 Births gather'd Strength by Exercise and Opposition!  
 How often by the Indiscretion of their Opponents  
 become formidable even to Truth itself! But if  
 Truth will quit her Post, and put herself upon unne-  
 cessary Skirmishes in the Confines of Error and Ig-  
 norance, it is no Wonder, if she sometimes suffers in  
 the Conflict. Neither Party, while they fight in the  
 Dark, has more than an equal Chance for Success.  
 And what is it, but to fight in the Dark, when *one*  
 insists upon greater Evidence than the Subject can  
 possibly admit, and the *other* will not be content  
 without giving him Satisfaction upon a Subject, which  
 neither of them understand! How often have two  
 strenuous Antagonists, one of which perhaps set out  
 in the Right, so puzzled and perplexed themselves  
 with unmeaning Terms, so blinded themselves with  
 the Cloud, which they have raised between them,  
 that in the End they have proved both in the wrong:  
 How often has Religion itself been injured through  
 the Sides of an injudicious Advocate! And how of-  
 ten has the Destruction of an ancient Heresy given  
 Birth to a Brood of new ones! Have not almost all  
 the Disputes and Divisions, that ever infested the  
 Christian World, been upon Subjects of the most  
 mysterious Nature? And have they not all had their  
 Rise

SERM. Rise from the same common Source, the Desire of  
 VI. being wise above what is written, and the Pride of  
 explaining inexplicable Difficulties? How much better would it have been for the Combatants themselves, and the World that was to receive the Benefit of their Labours, if they had been content to talk Sense upon Subjects they understood, and silently acknowledged with Wonder and Reverence, *that the Secret things belong to the Lord our God!* Especially if it be considered in the third Place,

III. That there are other Matters of far greater Consequence, sufficient to employ our Meditation, and which it is our Duty to study and examine. *The things which are revealed, belong to us and to our Children for ever.* By the (things which are revealed, we may understand in the Place before us all things, that are any way made evident to our Reason. For whatever Distinctions may be sometimes made between the Evidence of Sense and Reason, or between the Evidence of Reason and Revelation, they are all in this Case the same. The Senses are but Inlets or Avenues, by which outward Objects make their Way to the Understanding: It is the Reason or Thinking Faculty, which helps us to form our Judgment, and which should ultimately determine our Assent. When therefore we distinguish, as we sometimes do, between the Evidence of Sense and Reason, we can mean no more than this; that in some Cases, our Reason is assisted by our Senses, and in others it is not. In spiritual and abstracted Speculations, we have the Use of our Reason only; but in Matters, which are the proper Objects of our Senses, they furnish the Mind with Intelligence, and she forms her Judgment thereupon. But in both Cases we appeal to Reason, and upon her Answer we found our Faith

Faith. Revelation is another Help, but is no more SERM.  
VI.  
than a Help to Reason. It discovers to us many Secrets of Nature, many great Designs of Providence, many forcible Motives to the Practice of our Duty, which would otherwise have been hidden from our Eyes. But Revelation itself can have no Credit and Authority, till it has received the Approbation of our Reason. For whatever Articles of Faith are revealed to us in holy Writ, are founded upon no surer Evidence, than that the Scriptures are the Word of God: Now that the Scriptures are the Word of God, we discover by our Reason only; and therefore whatever Degree of Certainty those Articles may be supposed to have, it can be no greater than our Reason gives. This Observation I thought necessary to be made, because the Evidence of Faith is sometimes magnified and exalted in Opposition to that of Reason, nay in Opposition to what is called the Evidence of Sense. A Notion which may be of Use for the Support of Popery, which is established in downright Contradiction to our Senses: But our Religion does not want such Helps. It is a Dis-service to any Cause, to call in Error and Falshood to its Assistance: And Truth itself is too apt to suffer from the Defeat of such weak Auxiliaries. On the contrary, to suppose our Faith to be founded, as it is, on Reason, is so far from invalidating the Evidence of Faith, that it does very much confirm and strengthen it. For what greater Degree of Certainty can be required by any rational Creature, than to be convinced upon rational Principles? If it were possible for God Almighty to require us to believe upon any other Grounds, our Faith would be nothing but Error and Confusion, and there would be no such thing as Certainty in the World.

Whatever

SERM.

VI



Whatever therefore is made so evident to our Reason, whether left to her own Inferences and Deductions, or aided by the Information of the Senses, or instructed by the Word of God; whatever, I say, is by any of these Ways made so evident to our Reason, that we believe and acknowledge it to be true, whether we fully understand the Manner of it or no, may be said to be revealed by God. And what a vast Field does this afford for Contemplation! Who would complain with such a boundless View before him, that his Prospect is not more enlarged? That Mystery, *which was hid from Ages and Generations, and which the Angels desired to look into*, is now made manifest unto us. We know enough to employ our Wonder, and enough to furnish Matter for our Joy; enough to make us easy here; and enough to make us *wise unto Salvation*: And if this will not yield us Satisfaction, the same restless Curiosity would still disquiet us, if we had the Powers and Capacities of Angels: He who, with that Degree of Certainty which the Scriptures offer him, can be an Infidel, or Immoral Man, does not want Knowledge but Inclination; It is not, because he cannot, but because he will not believe to Purpose. Which leads me to consider in the fourth and last Place,

IV. That this as well as all our other Knowledge will be utterly lost and useless, unless it has an Influence upon our Lives; the only Use of Knowledge being, to guide and conduct us to the Land of everlasting Rest.

This is a Proposition so very evident in itself, that nothing but the Corruption and Iniquity of Mankind could make it necessary to be at all insisted upon. Every Body knows, that Heaven was never proposed as a Reward to Wisdom or Learning, and that





that no Man will be condemn'd to endless Torments for any but wilful Ignorance. It is the Practice of our Duty only, that must make us acceptable to God, however other Endowments may make us valuable in the World. But it is the Misfortune of our most holy Religion, that the Pride and Ostentation of Knowledge has in a Manner destroyed the Use of it. If it will but procure Respect and Esteem, People are well enough satisfied with that Reward, and look for no further End in it: Insomuch that, to the Shame and Reproach of Knowledge, it is grown with some into a current Proverb, that Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion.

One would think indeed from the Zeal of contending Parties, that they had Religion very much at Heart; but it appears too often from their managing the Debate, that it is in truth the Pride of Victory, the Glory of gaining Profelytes to a Party, which is really the prevailing Motive at their Hearts. But let them remember that all useful Knowledge, as much as it may seem to be an Attainment of our own, is *indeed the free Gift of God*: A Talent committed to our Custody for the Benefit of others, as well as of ourselves. We must expect to give a strict Account of it, and little will it avail us, when that Account is required, to say, *Lord, in thy Name have we taught and written: In thy Name have we cast out Hereticks, and vanquished the Enemies of thy Faith*; unless it appears at that great Tribunal, that we have acted like Men, who believed in earnest; that our Conduct has been conformable to our Knowledge, and that we have approv'd ourselves Christians, *not in Word only, but in Deed and in Truth. Where then is the Wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this World?* The very least in the Kingdom

SERM. dom of Heaven is Greater than he. In a word, let  
 VI. every one pursue Knowledge, as he pleases, but let  
 it not cause him to forget Religion. The Desire of  
 Knowing is a natural Appetite, and like the rest of  
 'em, not to be extinguished, but only regulated and  
 conducted by Reason. *Wisdom is the principal thing,*  
*says Solomon; Therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy*  
*Getting, get Understanding:* But let us remember the  
 Advice of a greater than Solomon, *let us hunger and*  
*thirst after Righteousness too.* This is not only the truest  
 Wisdom itself, [but likewise the surest Method to  
 gain all the other Wisdom we desire. If we will  
 indulge this Thirst of Knowledge, then will be our  
 Time to gratify it, when we have the Enjoyment of  
 God's Presence in Heaven: When all the Difficulties  
 that perplex us now, will be removed: When our  
 Faculties will be more vigorous and active, and in-  
 stead of that short Span of Existence which we call  
 Life on Earth, we shall have a whole Eternity before  
 us, to go on *from Strength to Strength*, and entertain  
 ourselves with new Discoveries for ever.

*Now to God, &c.*





*All Words to be accounted for at  
the Day of Judgment.*

A

## S E R M O N

On MAT. xii. 36, 37.

*But I say unto you, that every idle Word,  
that Men shall speak, they shall give ac-  
count thereof at the Day of Judgment.  
For by thy Words thou shalt be justified, and  
by thy Words thou shalt be condemned.*



THE Occasion of these Words, was an uncharitable Censure, which was past upon our Saviour by the Pharisees, concerning the Power by which he wrought his Miracles. Even the Healing of one possessed with a Devil, which we are told he had done (*ver. 22.*) they were so unwilling to ascribe to the Finger of God, as in all Reason and Justice they should have done, that they chose rather to impute it, by a most blasphemous Suggestion, to the Hand of an infernal Agent. *This Fellow, say they, doth not cast out Devils, but by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils.* To this groundless and mali-

SERM.  
VII.

SERM. cious Calumny, our Saviour makes a sharp Reply, VII. shewing, First, the manifest Absurdity of the Objection, and Secondly, the unpardonable Guilt of it: after which he proceeds to expostulate with his Accusers, concerning the Wickedness and Uncharitableness of their Hearts, the corrupt Fountain from which their Censure flowed, concluding with these Words which I have chosen for my Text, *But I say unto you, that every idle Word, &c.*

To mollify the seeming Rigour and Severity of which Words, the Word in the Original, which is rendered *idle*, has been explained by some in a very different Sense, as signifying *false* or *wicked*; as if our Saviour had meant, that not of every idle, but of every false or wicked Word that Men shall speak, they shall give Account at the Day of Judgment. But as this, it must be owned, is a very forced Interpretation, so in this Place there is no need to have Recourse to it: the Words containing nothing but what is strictly true, in their plainest and most easy Sense. For whatever is meant by idle Words, it is not said, that they are either damnable or criminal; but only that we shall give Account of them; and so we shall of every Action of our Lives, which nevertheless, by God's Grace, may be so far from condemning us, that they may qualify us in some measure for a Reward in Heaven. It is said indeed in the next Verse, that *by our Words we shall be condemned*: But it is said also, that *by our Words we shall be justified*. From one of which Assertions it can no more be inferred, that by idle Words is meant any thing that is wicked, than from the other it may be inferred, that by the same Expression is meant something that is good or virtuous. The Truth is, that by the Epithet of *idle*, is meant neither Good nor Harm; all that our Saviour designed



to shew by it, being indeed no more than this; that **SERM.**  
 however rashly and inconsiderately our Words may **VII.**  
 fly from us, how little soever we may attend to their  
 Guilt or Innocence, they will all be accounted for at  
 the Day of Judgment. Unless therefore, to give an  
 Account of any thing, does necessarily imply, that  
 we shall be punished for it, there is nothing surely in  
 this Interpretation, that can reasonably give the least  
 Offence. But this is so far from being true, that on  
 the contrary, to call any one to account supposes that,  
 till that Account is given, it is uncertain whether he  
 be innocent or guilty. Accordingly, of all the Ser-  
 vants in the Parable, that were intrusted with so ma-  
 ny Talents by their Master, though they were all re-  
 quired to account for the Use of them, yet there was  
 but one that was found faulty in his Conduct.

It is true, that the Occasion of our Saviour's Words  
 did lead him to take notice, not of idle or inadver-  
 tent, but of wicked and uncharitable Discourse. But  
 he had done with that before: He had said enough  
 concerning the Blasphemy of the Pharisees, by tell-  
 ing them before that it *should never be forgiven them,*  
*neither in this World, nor in that which is to come.* And  
 as nothing was more common with him, in other  
 Cases, than to take Occasion from any Incident,  
 that had fallen in his way, to lay down a Doctrine of  
 a more extensive Nature than the Occasion itself re-  
 quired, so nothing could be more natural in the Case  
 before us, when he had spoken to the Point which  
 more particularly concerned him, than to take Occa-  
 sion from thence to continue his Discourse in more  
 general and comprehensive Terms, telling them,  
 that not only every wilful and deliberate, but every  
 idle Word that Men should speak, they shall give ac-  
 count thereof at the Day of the Judgment. The

SERM. Reason of which he assigns in the next Verse, *viz.*

VII. that Words are Things of a moral Nature; Things that may render us either innocent or guilty, and consequently may tend to justify or condemn us. *For by thy Words thou shalt be justified, and by thy Words thou shalt be condemned.*

In my further Discourse on the Words before us, I shall

I. Shew the Truth of our Saviour's Doctrine, in the Sense wherein I take it to have been meant.

II. I shall shew the Reasonableness, the Equity and Mildness of God's dealing with us in this Respect.

III. I shall point out the particular Kind of Words, which we have Reason to think will be most regarded, and tend most either to justify or condemn us.

First, I am to shew the Truth of our Saviour's Doctrine, in the Sense wherein I take it to have been meant.

By *idle* Words we are then to understand, all Words spoken carelessly and inconsiderately, without a due Regard to their immediate Import, or to their natural Consequences and Effects. And whereas it is said, that such Words as these shall be accounted for at the Day of Judgment, by this we are to understand, that these, as well as others, *i. e.* in truth, all our Words in general, shall be laid up against the Time of that solemn Process; that then they shall be produced, and the Nature of them examined, and if there appears to be either Virtue or Vice in them, that Virtue or Vice shall be placed to our Account, and help either to justify or condemn us.

That this will be the Case, may appear from this Reason; That it is indeed impossible for any Word

we

we speak, as much as for any Action we perform, to SERM.  
 escape the Knowledge or Attention of our Judge. VII.  
 The Reason why we are apt to persuade ourselves,   
 that some of our least considerable Offences may pass  
 unheeded, in such a Multitude of Particulars, as will  
 constitute that general Enquiry, is because, if we  
 ourselves were Judges, we should be apt, for our  
 own Ease, to neglect them. But far be it from the  
 Thoughts of any of us, to ascribe our own Frailties  
 to the Almighty! The Mind of Man is too impotent  
 and feeble to bear a long Attention to any Thing ;  
 much less is it able, at the same instant of Time, to  
 extend itself to such a Multitude of distinct Enquiries,  
 as are expected at that Time to be considered. It is  
 the peculiar Excellence of the divine Wisdom, that  
 it sees, in one general comprehensive View, whatso-  
 ever is past, present, or to come. To say less than  
 this of it, is to bound and limit it, and consequent-  
 ly to make it less than infinite. Since then it is im-  
 possible for any Word we speak, to escape the Know-  
 ledge and Attention of our Judge, what Reason can  
 there be, why we should not be expected to account  
 for the most idle of them? To say, they are beneath  
 his Notice, is still measuring him by our own short  
 Ideas. They are indeed, in one Sense, infinitely be-  
 neath him ; and so is every Thing that Man can boast  
 of : Which made the Psalmist cry out, as he did, in an  
 humble Sense of human Frailties and Imperfections ;  
*Lord, what is Man, that thou takest Knowledge of him,  
 or the Son of Man, that thou makest Account of him ?*  
 and again, *Who is like unto the Lord our God, who  
 dwelleth on high ; who humbleth himself to behold the  
 Things that are in Heaven and Earth ?* This indeed,  
 according to the Notions of Men, is a most wonder-  
 ful and astonishing Condescension. But since he is

SERM. pleased to condescend so far, it is no Wonder if he  
 VII. goes something farther; the meanest Concerns of  
 human Life being as worthy of his Cognizance as  
 the greatest; or rather the greatest as unworthy as  
 the meanest: And since he is not too high to inspect  
 the one, there is no Reason why he should overlook  
 the other. If the infinite Distance between the Crea-  
 ture and the Creator, does not hinder him from at-  
 tending to our Behaviour in general, much less will  
 the different Importance of our Words cause him to  
 neglect those that are the least important, since be-  
 tween these there is at best but some small Disparity,  
 but between him and us there is no Proportion at all.

The Truth is, it is not the Importance of what we  
 say, that causes it to be regarded by Almighty God,  
 but his own Sovereign Wisdom and Justice: The for-  
 mer of which would be deficient, if he did not judge,  
 and the latter, if he did not punish or reward it. To  
 suppose therefore, that any Word we speak, that is  
 capable in the least Degree of being punished or re-  
 warded, will be overlooked at the Day of Judgment,  
 is supposing that, for which no Reason can be assigned,  
 but what is injurious to the Honour of God, and argues  
 an Imperfection in his Nature. Upon the whole then,  
 I conclude, that every Word we speak, however  
 lightly and inconsiderately uttered, will make Part  
 of that Account, which is to fix the Sentence, that  
 will make us happy or miserable for ever.

II. The Reasonableness of God's dealing with us  
 in this Respect, is what I am to consider in the next  
 Place. To which End it may be observed, that in  
 Propriety of Speech there is no Difference between  
 Words and Actions; and therefore if it be reasonable  
 we should account for either, it is as reasonable we  
 should account for both. Whatever we may be said



to do, may be called an Action; and Speaking there-SERM.  
fore among other Things is included. It is performed, VII.  
like all other Actions, except Thinking, by the Help  
of a bodily Organ: It is apprehended, like them,  
by one of the Senses, whose immediate Object it is,  
and by the means of which it acts upon the Mind,  
where it produces as much Pain and Pleasure, as much  
Good and Evil, as any other Action we can per-  
form. And this it is, which constitutes its Morality.  
Whatever may be either mischievous or beneficial in  
its Effects, whether it flows from an Intention of do-  
ing Good or Evil, or from a confirmed and settled Ha-  
bit of either, being in its Nature a moral Action, and  
as such, to be either punished or rewarded.

Must then every little Error, every Slip of Memory,  
every Flight of Fancy, every light and every ludi-  
crous Expression, *be weighed in the exact Balance of the*  
*Sanctuary*? No Allowance to be made for Frailty, no  
Room for Mercy? But every Word we speak to be  
strictly scann'd by the Rules of impartial Justice?  
And will no Man be acquitted at the Day of Judg-  
ment, but he that, in the Uprightness and Integrity  
of his Heart, can stand the Test of so severe a Scrutiny?  
To all these Questions I answer once for all,  
That nothing like this has been asserted. That God  
cannot but know every Word we speak, and judge  
it to be what it is, and will actually produce it at  
the Day of Judgment, is all that has been yet con-  
tended for. And it is further probable, that when  
that Day comes, he will call to our Remembrance  
the whole Conduct of our Lives, exhibiting every  
Part of them so distinctly to our Observation, that  
our Consciences will readily bear Testimony to his  
Justice, whatever Sentence may be pronounced upon  
us. What Allowances will be made for our Frailties

SERM. and Infirmities, it is impossible for human Wisdom to  
 VII. determine. But this we know, that the Justice of  
 ~~~~~ God will be so tempered and allayed with Mercy,  
 that no Man will think he has any Reason to complain,
 whatever Penalty is inflicted on him, but be ready to confess,
that God is not extreme to mark what is said or what is done amiss, being charged with nothing
 but what he knew to be a Sin, and which it was absolutely
 in his own Power to avoid.

And in truth, if any one would but seriously reflect upon
 the several Offences of this Kind, which he has committed,
 and then ask his Conscience, whether he could not have been
 prevailed upon to forbear committing them by any Motive or
 Inducement whatsoever; there is no doubt but he wou'd answer
 in the Affirmative. For where is the Tongue so licentious
 and unruly, that no Profit or Reward can curb it? On the
 other hand, if such Offences had been made capital by the
 Law, so that Death had been the sure Reward of them,
 where is the Man that in his sober Senses would have
 ventur'd his Life for the Commission of them? Would not
 every Man, for Instance, if this had been the Case, have
 been as much afraid of Blasphemy, as of Treason? of
 injuring or assaulting his Neighbour's Character, as of
 invading his Person or Estate? I put these Cases only
 to make it evident, that though perhaps it may be extremely
 difficult, yet at least it is not absolutely impossible to
 abstain from all Offences of the Tongue. What then could
 have been said to impeach God's Justice, if after he had
 published and proclaimed his Will to us, he had insisted
 upon our absolute Obedience? But, blessed be his Goodness!
 we are upon better Terms. Repentance will wash out
 much greater Stains: Much more will it make amends for
 those
 Slips

Slips and Failings, which are too common in our ordinary Discourse, and which cannot without Care be avoided. The Debt indeed will be still remembred, because it is impossible for infinite Wisdom to forget it: But Repentance will cancel the Obligation, so that nothing will be farther requisite for the Discharge of it. Where then is the Hardship of calling us to account, when the Debtor's being sorry for contracting the Debt, will be accepted as legal Payment? Or where is the Severity of this Procedure, by which all the Good we can pretend to, will be brought to Light, and all the Evil, if we please, forgiven? The Strictness of the Scrutiny, if we are not wanting to ourselves, will but serve to increase our Happiness, and at the same time to display the full Extent of *that Mercy*, which, to make amends for such a Multitude of nameless Trespases, will accept of such a slender Recompence. That therefore this Recompence may be strictly paid, wherever it is already due, and become due hereafter in as few Instances as possible, I proceed to point out, in the

III^d and last Place, the particular Kind of Words, which we have Reason to think will be most regarded at the Day of Judgment, and tend most either to justify or condemn us. I shall begin with those which must needs tend to condemn us, which after I have pointed out, it will appear on the other hand, what *they* are, which will tend to justify us; it being well known, that contrary Causes will always produce contrary Effects. Now among the Words that are most criminal and offensive to Almighty God, and consequently most likely to condemn us, may be reckoned,

I. All blasphemous and profane Discourse; by which I mean not only the Practice of common Swear-

SERM. ing, which can never be too much complained of,
 VII. but the many other Ways of dishonouring God's
 Name, by disrespectful Language, by ludicrous Expressions, by bold, presumptuous and profane Reflections on those things which are related to him. I need not enlarge on this horrid Practice; it is too well known, what Pride and Pleasure some Persons take in Offences of this Kind, as if there were Wit in ridiculing an All-wise, or Courage in provoking an Almighty Being. I will not say, how near a Resemblance this Sin has to that of the Pharisees, which our Saviour tells them, shall never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in that which is to come. But this I must say: There will come a Time, when, among the idle Words, which Men are apt to utter, these Blasphemies and Impieties, so wantonly thrown out, shall make a dreadful and severe Account, and then they will confess with Shame and Sorrow, that there was neither Wit nor Wisdom in them.

II. But, Secondly, another Kind of Words or Speeches, which will tend to condemn us at the Day of Judgment, are those which are apt to corrupt Mens Manners, and which, though they do not vindicate and justify Vice, do nevertheless help to countenance and support it. Now this is done, when any wicked Action is mentioned with a kind of Pleasure and Complacency; when we do not rather shew our Abhorrence of it, that to the best of our Power we may disgrace it. We have lived to see Wickedness of every Sort no longer sheltered and concealed by false Colours, but acting its Part openly and avowedly, confessed by some without Shame or Sorrow, and imputed by others without Censure or Reproach. And where is the Difference, while this is so, whether we are corrupted in our Principles or our Practice?
 Whether

Whether we believe with the bold and profane Blasphe-
 mer, that there will never be any After-reckon-
 ing to set these Matters right, or whether we are so
 bewitched with the Allurement of Sense, that we ne-
 ver consider whether it will be so or not, but are re-
 solved to stand the Chance of what may happen then,
 and in the mean time to enjoy our Vices? To which
 most miserable and dreadful Infatuation, there is no-
 thing, to be sure, that can more effectually conduce,
 than this Custom of representing Vice in such amiable
 and inviting Colours, as if it were attended with nei-
 ther Guilt nor Infamy. And well therefore does it
 deserve the Sentence pronounced against it: *Wo unto
 them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put
 Darknes for Light, and Light for Darknes, that put
 bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.* Thus to de-
 stroy the Distinctions between Vice and Virtue, by
 confounding Things that are contrary to each other,
 being doubtless the best and most effectual Method to
 bring Vice into Credit and Repute.

III. But, Thirdly, another Kind of Words or
 Speeches, that will be much regarded at the Day of
 Judgment, are those which are spoken to defraud our
 Neighbour, and made use of as the Instruments of
 Deceit. Now this is an Offence the more heinous
 and provoking, because it is an Abuse of the best
 Member that we have, by perverting it from the End
 for which it was designed, to a Purpose which is di-
 rectly the Reverse of it. Speech is the distinguishing
 Excellence of Man compared with his Fellow-Crea-
 tures upon the Earth. It was given him to commu-
 nicate his Thoughts to others, and to establish such
 an Intercourse of good Offices among us, as might
 make us useful and beneficial to each other. Now
 if, instead of promoting this desirable End, we do,

by

SERM.
 VII.

SERM. by the Use of either false or prevaricating Expressions,
 VII. so impose upon the Judgment and Understanding of
 other Men, that they take Things to be otherwise
 than they are, and that too, with a Design, by our
 superior Cunning, to make Advantage of their Ignorance or Credulity, we do manifestly frustrate the Design of our Creator in blessing us with this excellent Endowment. Nor is it at all material, in such a Case as this, that we say nothing but what is strictly true. For if Truth itself be so managed and contrived, as to answer the End of Falshood, it is to all Intents and Purposes a Lye, and as such will be considered at the Day of Judgment, when the Secrets of all Hearts shall be opened. But

IV. Fourthly and lastly, another Kind of Words, which ought to be avoided, as very criminal and offensive, are those, which are spoken to defame our Neighbours, and to injure them in their Credit and Repute. This is an Offence so very common in the World, that I fear, there are few who are entirely free from it; and even of those few, who seem to be so, there are some, no doubt, who are not so much concerned about their Neighbour's Character as their own. They would be looked upon, perhaps, as Persons of great Candour, who have too much Conscience to report any thing that is false, and too much Humanity to delight in Censure, if it be true. And indeed this is a Temper so very amiable and engaging, that it is no Wonder if some aim at the Appearance of it, who feel nothing of the generous Sentiments which attend it. But the faint Praises of such Men as these are as sure an Indication of an uncharitable Heart, as the worst and most virulent Reproaches. Their Words are smoother than Oil, and yet be they very Swords, wounding the Reputation

tation of their Friends the more effectually, under the SERM
Colour of being drawn in their Defence. For if he, VII.
that professes himself to be my Friend and Advocate, 
does by an aukward Vindication give me up to Cen-
sure, or aggravate the Fault which is laid to my
Charge by an Excuse, which is the greater Scandal
of the two, what other Constrution can be made of
his Behaviour, but that I must needs be very wicked
indeed, since so little can be said in my Defence by
one who seems to be so willing to defend me? Thus
has he the Character of a good-natur'd Friend, while
he is acting not only an ill-natur'd and unfriendly,
but an ungenerous and unmanly Part, and is beholden
to his Cowardise for the Success of that Scandal,
which would have lost its Aim, and have pass'd for
nothing, if he had had the Courage more openly to
avow it.

I have been the more particular in describing this
Kind of Censure, because it is of all the most mis-
chievous in its Effect. But numberless are the Arts,
which are put in practice by such People, partly to
propagate their Scandal the more effectually, and
partly to escape the Danger of proclaiming it. Those
who are observ'd to be most forward in promoting it,
for their own Parts have more Charity than to be-
lieve it; they are sorry for it, though they are glad
to publish it; at the same time that they shew, by
their affected Backwardness, that they are publishing
what they ought to conceal. But it is not my Busi-
ness to enumerate the Arts of Scandal, which would
require almost as much Eloquence as to practise them.
Be it sufficient, that I admonish you of the Guilt and
Danger of it, in whatever Form of Words it is con-
ceived: Which though perhaps it may be so ordered
and contrived, as to do Mischief without seeming to
intend

SERM. intend it, will nevertheless at the Day of Judgment
 VII. be considered in another Light; and all those Artifices and Disguises, which help now to conceal our Guilt, will then serve to aggravate and increase it, by representing us in the Sight of Almighty God both as Slanderers and Dissemblers too.

Thus have I gone through the several Kinds of Words, which will be most likely to condemn us at the Day of Judgment: From which it will be no hard Matter to infer, what those are, which will tend to justify us. We must not only abstain from all blasphemous and profane, all dissolute and immoral, all false and fraudulent, all censorious and defamatory Expressions, but we must likewise strive, in all our Conversation, to promote God's Glory and the Good of Mankind in its most general and comprehensive Sense; *i. e.* we must not only have a strict Regard to their Welfare and Reputation in this World, but must also study to inspire them with such virtuous Principles, and to make them in Love with such honest Practices, as are likely to promote their Happiness in the next. He that will act this Part with Care, will have but few idle Words to answer for: And he that can act it prudently and discreetly, will soon find so much Pleasure in the Practice of it, that he will have but little Relish for those vain Discourses, which make up the Conversation of the Dissolute and Profane. Such Company therefore let us carefully avoid, or if we are necessarily obliged to engage in it, let us take care not to be infected by their Example; *Let us keep our Mouths as it were with a Bridle, while the Ungodly are in our Sight.* Let us pray to God for his Succour and Defence, that he, by the Influence of his preventing Grace, may be pleased to *set a Watch over our Mouths, and keep the Door of our Lips.* Above all, let

Let us strive, by repeating our Endeavours, to fix such **SERM.**
 an Habit of Virtue in our Hearts, *out of the Abun-* **VIL.**
dance of which the Mouth speaketh, that we may never
 be tempted to speak contrary to our Duty by any evil
 Suggestions from within; but be ready upon all
 proper Occasions, to express such a decent Regard for
 God's Honour, and such a laudable Zeal for the In-
 terests of Religion, as will naturally flow from a Heart
 warm with the Love of God, and the Hopes of a
 Reward in Heaven. Which that we may all receive
 at the Hands of our righteous Judge, may God of
 his great Mercy grant, through the Merits of our
 Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ.*





The Duty of continual Watching.

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

KING'S HOUSHOLD.

MARK xiii. 37.

*And what I say unto you, I say unto all,
watch.*

SERM.
VIII.



OUR Saviour, in the Verses which go before my Text, had taken Occasion from a Question put to him by his Disciples, concerning the Time when the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, foretold by him, should happen, to give them a strict Charge to be always ready against the Coming of the Son of Man; meaning, as appears from many Circumstances there mentioned, not only his first Coming to take Vengeance of the *Jews*, by destroying their City, their Temple, and their Government, and by cutting them off from that visible Relation, which they had hitherto borne to God; but likewise his last
Com-

Coming at the End of the World, to dispense his Re-SERM. wards, and inflict his Punishments, pursuant to that VIII. Doctrine, which those who asked this Question, when they came to be enlightened by the Influence of the Holy Ghost, were appointed to make known unto the World. At the End of the Direction, which he gives them to this Purpose, he subjoins the Admonition in my Text: *And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch*, i. e. the Advice, which I have now given you to be careful, that ye be not surprised when the Son of Man cometh, but may be ready to meet him, and without Fear or Shame give account of your Behaviour to him, I do not confine to the Persons of those Men, whom I have chosen to myself, as my Instruments or Agents to spread abroad my Doctrine in the World, and whom therefore it behoves to be more vigilant and careful, for the sake of others, as well as of themselves; But I would have it understood as a general Precept, directed to all Persons, that either hear it now, or may hear it at any Time hereafter, that they may live in Expectation of that dreadful Day, and be prepared at all Times to meet it.

This being supposed to be the Meaning of the Words, the particular Care which our Saviour here takes, to extend his Precept to all Persons in the World, that might think it worth while to be directed by him, should dispose us to be the more attentive to what he says; the more willing to enquire, what the Duty is, and for what Reasons it is so carefully recommended.

Concerning the Coming of the Son of Man, against which we are here bid to watch, there being, as appears, such a Latitude of Interpretation, I shall here suppose, that by these Words we are to understand,

SERM. stand, both his Coming to take Vengeance of the
 VIII, disobedient *Jews*, by the utter Excision of that
 Church and People, and also his second Coming to
 judge the World, which, however it may exceed
 and surpass the former, as being a much greater and
 more general Concern, will nevertheless, in some
 Circumstances, resemble it so nearly, that our Sa-
 viour might design, as it is plain he does elsewhere,
 to express both together in such Words and Phrases,
 as might properly be applied to either. And if this
 was so, it may not be improper to consider the Words,
 so intended by our Saviour, with a View to both
 Senses in their Order.

First then, as these Words were spoken to the
Jews, in answer to a Question, that had been put to
 our Saviour, concerning the precise Time, when
 that dreadful Judgment, which hung over their Heads,
 should be accomplished; an Event which is now
 past, and which cannot concern us, any further than
 it is a Proof of God's Wrath against Sinners, and an
 Instance of that Vengeance, which he may be pleased
 to execute on any other disobedient and unthankful
 People, who continue, like them, to despise his
 Laws, notwithstanding his Goodness to them; I say,
 the Words in this View are no Rule to us, nor in
 this Sense are they directed to us. But because it
 often happens, that even temporal Calamities are
 inflicted on us by God's Justice for our Sins; and no
 People can be sure, however prosperous they are
 now, that this may not be their Case hereafter;
 it is therefore no more than common Prudence in us,
 to make use of all Cautions and Admonitions of this
 Kind, that can any way be suggested to us; first,
 to convince us of the Uncertainty and Instability of
 every thing, that can be called Happiness among
 Men;

Men; and, secondly, to teach us the best Means, to **SERM.**
escape, or else the best Spirit to bear up with Pa- **VIII.**
tience against every Kind of Evil that may befall us. 
Such was the Rule which our Saviour gave the
Jews, to prepare them against the worst and forest
Evil, that ever happened to any People upon Earth;
an utter Subversion of their Government and Reli-
gion, attended with the Loss of their Country, or
their Liberty, and (what is more) of that Favour
and Protection from above, which, how much so-
ever they had slighted it in Prosperity, had always
been their sure Refuge in Distress. The Precept
which our Saviour thought fit to give them, for the
Benefit of those few, who might be dispos'd to use
it, was compris'd in one Word, *to watch*, i. e. to
preserve and keep up within them such a lively Ap-
prehension of those dreadful Judgments, which God's
Prophets had denounced against them, that they
might do all in their Power to avert them from them-
selves, and to be exempted from the common Suffer-
ings of their Country: not by looking out and en-
quiring, as they did, into the Time when these
Things should happen (the Knowledge of which,
instead of quickening their Care, might probably
have caused them to be more dissolute and remiss,
as thinking it Time enough to reform their Lives,
when the Day of Wrath should draw nearer to them)
but by using their Endeavours to prepare their Hearts,
by watching over them, by taking heed to their
Ways, and by furnishing themselves with such Virtues
and Graces as might stand them in some Stead, and
prove a Blessing to them, whenever that Day should
come. Blessed be God! we are not threatened with
Destruction, in like manner as that People was: But
we ought not, therefore, to be less upon our Guard,
since

SERM. since no Condition can be secure from Danger, nor
 VIII. exempt us from that necessary Dependence on God's
 Providence, which is always our best Safety and
 Defence. Indeed, the more confident and secure
 we are, the greater may our Danger prove: for
 which Reason it was, that *he who thinketh he standeth,*
 is exhorted by the Apostle *to take heed lest he fall.*
 And sure I am, that however prosperous and happy
 our Condition may be *now* justly thought, if we will
 but reflect on our own Conduct and Behaviour, and
 consider how little we have deserved these Blessings,
 and how unthankful, for the most part, we are for
 them; how much Vanity and Excess, how much
 Luxury and Riot, how much Envy and Discontent,
 and Strife and Faction, and how much Wickedness
 of all Kinds prevails; how the Name of Christ is
 blasphemed among us; how the Mysteries of our
 Religion, which should always be held sacred, are
 prostituted and exposed to Scorn by Infidels; and in-
 deed, how the Principles of common Honesty and
 Morality, how much soever they have been in
 Theory extolled, have in Fact lost the Credit and
 Authority they ought to have, through the wicked
 Lives, and debauched Practices of Men; I say, if we
 will but seriously consider these Things, though we
 cannot infer from them, that God will certainly be
 provoked to punish us by the Infliction of any tem-
 poral Evil, such as that which the *Jews* suffered for
 their Disobedience, yet, doubtless, if any publick
 Calamity should overtake us, we shall have Reason
 enough to impute it to that Cause, and to say, that
 it is a just Judgment for our Sins. And ought not
 this to be a Motive to every pious Christian, to
 every Man indeed, who has his own Interest at
 Heart, to consider with himself, how far he may be

con-

concerned, by his Want of Zeal to promote the In-SERM. terests of Religion, in raising that Deluge of Impiety VIII. and Profaneness, which may chance to overwhelm his Country? The particular Offences of every private Person, as they help to fill up the full Measure of Iniquity, which may call down God's Vengeance on our Heads, would doubtless, in the Execution of that Vengeance on us, be imputed to those only who had offended. Those who stood clear of having raised the Storm, would either be delivered from the Destruction it brought with it, or else, if they were involved, as they sometimes are, in the common Ruin which is brought on others, they would find their Hearts so well prepared, so improved in Grace, so armed with Patience, so fortified and secured with Christian Courage, so much animated and inflamed with better Views and Prospects, which the Consciousness of their own Virtue would suggest, that in such a State of things, they would have neither Reason nor Inclination to complain, that they were hardly dealt with.

Such are the Benefits, which may reasonably be expected, with respect to all temporal Calamities and Afflictions, from such a Vigilance as is recommended in my Text. But this is a View, in which it was proposed to no other Persons, but the *Jews*, who were then living, and had Reason to expect, in pursuance of many Prophecies, such a Judgment to befall their Nation. The Sense, in which the Words were designed to be understood by all Christians in other Ages of the World, has Respect to a thing of much more Importance, a thing of a much greater and more general Concern, no less than the Trial of all Nations and Ages, all Sects and Parties, all Ranks, and Orders, and Degrees of Men at the
Judg-

SERM. Judgment Seat of *Christ*. This is the last Coming of
VIII. the Son of Man, against which all Christians are
 advised to watch, that they may not be unprepared
 to meet him. In Pursuance therefore of this useful
 Doctrine, let us next enquire, what it is to *watch* ;
 which is a figurative Expression, as it is used in this
 Place, denoting such a Care and Attention to our
 Duty, as becomes Men who know they are ac-
 countable to God for their Actions, Words and
 Thoughts. In its common Acceptation it is opposed
 to *Sleeping*, and imports such a Vigour and Activity
 of Mind, as may give Motion to the Body, set the
 Senses at Work, and employ the several Powers and
 Capacities of the Soul, in such Manner as she directs.
 It is also made use of as a Term in War, denoting
 the Office of those Persons, who are appointed to
 observe, and give notice of the Enemy's Approach,
 to those in whose Service they are employed. From
 these Uses of the Word it is not difficult to discover,
 in what Sense our Saviour meant it in my Text.
 As it signifies that active and lively State of Mind,
 which is necessary to discharge the several Offices of
 Life, in Opposition to Sleep, which disables us for
 all Business, locking up the Senses in a State of
 Indolence and Inactivity, and lulling the Soul to an
 Inattention and Forgetfulness of every thing which
 should employ its Thoughts, it does fitly represent
 that Zeal and Vigour, with which every good Chri-
 stian should pursue his Duty *to make his Calling and*
Election sure; in Opposition to that stupid and drowsy
 State of Mind, that Lethargy of the Soul, which is
 express in these Words, *Awake, thou that sleepest, and*
arise from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee Light.
 The careless and indifferent Behaviour of those Men,
 who are but half practised in the Ways of Virtue,
 who

who call themselves Christians, because they were baptized, and think they are good enough, because many are no better, and because some are much worse than they, never labouring and striving, as good Christians should, *to enter in at the narrow Gate to Life*, but content to proceed with the same slothful Steps, with which others have gone on before them, is, we see, in the Notion which the Scripture gives of it, little better than a State of Death; it is no better than Sleep, in which if they are disturbed by the soft Whispers of God's Voice within them, by the Call of his Ministers, by the Thunder of his Judgments, which may startle them for some Time, and awaken them from their Sins, causing them to lift up their Eyes to Heaven to avert God's Vengeance from them, yet they soon relapse and sink down to Rest, unable to sustain that Labour and Fatigue, of which the Christian Warfare must consist. How different from this is that Vigilance and Care, that Labour, that Diligence, that Zeal, that Ardour which inflames the Breast of every pious Christian, exciting him to employ the whole Power of his Soul, to exert his whole Strength, to engage all his Passions and Affections, as well as Reason, in the Service of his great Creator; to make the Practice of Religion the main Study and Employment, the chief Pleasure and Delight of Life, never losing Sight of this greatest Good, whatever Business or Recreation, whatever Views and Prospects, whatever Projects or Designs he has besides! This is to watch, this is to be awake, this is to perform the great Precept in my Text, in the first Sense of the Word which was suggested, as it stands opposed to that Dulness and Inactivity, that Coldness and Indifference to the Practice of all Virtue, that stupid, languid,

SERM. languid, slothful State of Mind, which may properly
 VIII be compared to Sleep, and out of which we must
 first be effectually awakened, before we can arrive
 at that Height of Virtue, which the Gospel of our
 blessed Saviour has required.

But, Secondly, Another Sense of the Word, which
 was suggested, arises from the Use of it as a military
 Term, importing the Employment of those Persons,
 who are appointed to observe, and give notice of the
 Enemy's Approach to those in whose Service they
 are engaged. And in this Sense it does very pro-
 perly and significantly set forth the great Caution
 and Circumspection, which the good Christian uses
 in contending with his ghostly Enemies. For indeed
 in this Conflict, all the Caution we can use, as good
 Men know by very sad Experience, is little enough
 to preserve our Virtue from the Snares which are
 laid against it. So great and mighty are the En-
 mies we have to deal with, and so impotent withal
 is the Heart of Man, against which all their Engines
 are directed, that without the utmost Care and Dili-
 gence in our Duty, it is a Post that can hardly be
 defended. I will not undertake to point out the
 Dangers to which we are particularly exposed. Bad
 Men know them by submitting to their Force, and
 good Men by the Difficulties they sometimes meet
 with in grappling and contending with them. We
 find by Experience, we have a Principle within us,
 which is too apt to take Part against us. We find
 also, that the World has its Traps and Snares, to
 seduce us from the Duty which we owe to God, and
 to tempt us into Misery and Ruin. Every Place we
 enter, every Company we meet, every Business we
 undertake, and every Pleasure we pursue; in short,
 every Accident or Occurrence of our Lives, whether
 good

good or evil, has some Snare or other, which it re-
quires some Care to shun. In this State of Things, SERM. VIII.
it is no Wonder that Religion is represented by the 
Scripture as a State of War: A War of the worst
Kind, being seated in the Heart, where a Siege is
carried on with so much Art and Cunning, that we
are too apt to mistake Enemies for Friends. Well
therefore does the wise Man advise us in those
Words, *Keep thy Heart with all Diligence; for out of
it are the Issues of Life.* According as we guard, or
expose our Heart to the violent Assaults of its Ene-
mies from without, and the treacherous Counsels of
its own Lusts within, we shall either secure, or give
up our Interest in the Prospect of everlasting Happi-
ness. And in this Sense therefore, as well as in the
former, must the Precept in my Text be understood,
as advising us to guard, or set a Watch upon our
Hearts, that they may not be surpris'd by any sud-
den Onset, nor betrayed by their own Lusts and Pas-
sions, but may always be prepared against every
Trial, that the Tempter may not find Admittance.

To this End, in the last Place, it ought also to be
observed, that to the Care and Vigilance recom-
mended in my Text, we should join our Prayers to
Almighty God to assist us in this necessary Work:
For *except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh
but in vain.* Our Care and Forecast is very little
worth, if it be not seconded by the Providence of
God, whose Wisdom alone can defeat the Cunning
of him who *lieth in wait to deceive.* By watching,
therefore, such a Watchfulness is here meant, as
may put us upon using the best Means we can, and
particularly Prayer, which is the best Means of all,
to enable us to overcome Temptation. Our Saviour
has sufficiently explained his Meaning in this Matter,

SERM. referring us to his first Directions, *Take heed, watch VIII. and pray*: So runs the Precept, *ver. 33.* and so therefore we ought here to understand it.

Thus much for the Nature and Extent of this Duty: The Motive or Inducement which we have to practise it, is delivered to us, *ver. 35.* This I shall but just mention, and conclude.

Watch ye therefore, says our blessed Saviour, *for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, at the cock-crowing, or in the morning.* The Master of the House is our Lord Himself, whose Coming at the Last Day to take Account of his Servants, will, to those who shall be then living, be so sudden and unexpected; and to those who shall be carried off by Death, which consigns them over to be tried at Christ's Judgment-Seat, will be so little known, till it is actually present, that for the Terror and Surprise which it shall bring along with it, it is compared to a *Thief's coming in the Night.* Hence it is, that we are so earnestly exhorted to *watch.* For unless we resolve, whatever else we do, to make our Duty so much the Business of our Lives, as never wholly and intirely to neglect it, he may come at such a Time, as perhaps we have devoted to the Commission of some wilful Sin: When we think of nothing less than the doing of our Duty, and preparing to receive our Lord. He may come *at Even,* when our Eyes are heavy; when wearied with the Toil and Fatigue of Virtue, we are insensibly relapsing into Sin and Folly, and are in such a State, that tho' we cannot be said to be quite dead in our Trespases and Sins, yet neither, on the other hand, can it be said we are awake, or enjoy such an active and lively Vigour, as may enable us to appear before him. He may come *at Midnight,* when we are

fast asleep ; when we have not one Spark of Religion left ; when the Soul is quite sunk, and oppress'd with Sin, and deaf to all Calls to Virtue. He may come *at the Cock-crowing*, when we are hearkening to the Call, when we begin to strive to shake off our Slumbers, and awake to a Life of Righteousness. He may come *in the Morning*, when we are but just awake, when we have indeed made a shift to recover our Understandings, to see the Error we were in, and to set about reforming, but as yet have not been able to compleat it. In all these Cases we are unprovided : We are not prepared to meet our Lord, who, whenever he comes, will expect us to be as ready, as if he were to come at *Noon* ; when we are not only awake, but intent upon our Duty, and have bestowed some Pains upon the Practice of it. This is the State in which he ought to find us, and on which alone we can depend with any Sort of Certainty, as a thing that will make us acceptable in his Sight. To be relapsing into Sin, to be confirmed and settled in it, to be just awaking to a Life of Virtue, or preparing to enter on it, are Conditions in which no Man would desire to be then found, when he is called to meet his Lord.

To conclude, If any of us has been less diligent in his Duty, less vigilant and watchful than my Text requires : let him resolve to enter on this Duty, not only with new Vigour and Resolutions of Amendment, but also with double Diligence to effect them. Let us not be like the Sluggard described by *Solomon*, who cries out in the Deadness and Slothfulness of his Heart, *yet a little Sleep, a little Slumber, a little more folding of the Hands to Sleep* ; a little more Indulgence in our Vices and Lusts, and then we will rise and work. In the mean time perhaps our Master cometh,

SERM. cometh, and findeth us sleeping: And how justly
 VIII. may he complain and expostulate with us, as he did
 once with his Disciples, *What, could ye not watch
 with me one Hour?* So short a Time as is necessary
 for your Passage to the Land of everlasting Rest?
 Take heed therefore, *watch and pray: Let your Loins
 be girded about, and your Lights burning: and ye your-
 selves like unto Men that wait for their Lord: Blessed
 are those Servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh,
 shall find watching. Verily, says our Saviour, He
 shall gird himself, and make them sit down to Meat,
 and come forth and serve them; and if he shall come in
 the second Watch, or come in the third Watch, when-
 ever he comes and finds them so, blessed are those Ser-
 vants.*

Now to God the Father, &c.





The true Nature and End of Fasting.

A

S E R M O N

Preached at *White-Hall.*

M A T T. ix. 15.

And Jesus said unto them, Can the Children of the Bride-Chamber mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the Days will come, when the Bridegroom will be taken from them, and then shall they fast.



UR Saviour in these Words makes SERM. IX.
 Answer to a Question, put to him by the Disciples of *John* the Baptist, concerning religious Abstinence or Fasting. By the Law of *Moses* some Fasting was required; and the Pharisees, who were strict Observers of that Law, especially of the outward Forms of it, had extended his Precept to a far greater Length; observing not only that solemn Fast, on which they were required to afflict their

SERM. *Souls*, by the positive and exprefs Will of God, but
 IX. also many others of their own Appointment, no less,
 it seems, than two Days in seven being dedicated to
 this Purpose by them. The Reason of this, as we
 learn from Scripture, was partly their ignorant and
 superstitious Zeal, inclining them to think, that such
 Acts as these had something meritorious in them;
 and partly their Hypocrisy and Pride of Heart, dis-
 posing them to make a Shew of great Sanctity and
 Devotion, to be admired and esteemed of Men. The
 Disciples of *John* were Men of better Principles:
They fasted often, but for better Reasons, such as
 were suggested by their Master to them, who was a
 Man of very strict and rigid Morals, and a great Ex-
 ample of that Abstinence and Self-denial, which was
 copied with so much Exactness by his Followers.
 Our Saviour, on the other hand, who lived much
 in publick, appeared to be less mortified and severe.
 He mixed in all Companies; bore a Part in their
 Entertainments; sat down at their Tables; was pre-
 sent at their Marriage Feasts, and ready to comply
 with all decent Freedoms that Custom had intro-
 duced amongst them. The Pharisees from hence
 took Occasion to accuse him in very harsh and dis-
 respectful Terms: *Behold*, say they, *a Man glutton-
 ous and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and
 Sinners.* The Disciples of *John* were more moderate
 in their Expressions; tho' they also thought that in
 this Point he was defective, and could not be per-
 suaded that this Chearfulness of Behaviour was con-
 sistent with that high Degree of Purity and Per-
 fection, which he seemed by all his Doctrines to
 profess. With these Thoughts about them they ap-
 ply themselves to him in the Verses which go before
 my Text; saying, *why do we and the Pharisees fast
 often,*

often, but thy Disciples fast not? i. e. Why are thy Disciples so singular in their Practice? Why are they distinguished, not only from us, but likewise from all others that we have ever heard of, who pretend to any great or extraordinary Degree of Sanctity, as the Pharisees are well known to do? Why do they, whose Righteousness is in some Respects required to exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, appear to fall so much short of them in this? Or how can they pretend to so much Piety and Devotion, when in this Instance they are so defective in it?

To this our Saviour answers in the Words of my Text: *First*, by a Question, *Can the Children of the Bride-chamber mourn, while the Bridegroom is with them?* And, *Secondly*, by a positive and express Assertion: *But the Days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*

For the better understanding of which Words, it should be observed, that the strict Relation which Christ bears to his Church, is figuratively represented in the Word of God by the Union between a Husband and his Wife. *The Husband*, says St. Paul, *is the Head of the Wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church.* In Allusion to this Figure, or *Mystery*, as St. Paul calls it, the Time that was employed by our blessed Saviour in laying the Foundation of his Church here on Earth, may very properly be considered as his Nuptials; because it was the Time when his Bride was espoused to him; the Time when he took upon him the Character of a Husband, and contracted this new Relation to the Church.

In this View it is, and with Reference to this Notion, that our Saviour here calls himself *the Bridegroom*: His Disciples for the same Reason are

called

SERM. called *the Children of the Bride-chamber*, i. e. as the
 IX. Words have been most commonly explained, the
 ~~~~~ Bridegroom's Friends employed by him in assisting  
 at the nuptial Ceremony: or, as perhaps they might  
 be better understood, the Bride herself; for such the  
 Church was; and of whom did the Church at that  
 Time consist, but the very Disciples concerning  
 whom he speaks?

The Propriety of the Expression in this latter Sense  
 may be justified by a Figure much used by the Eastern  
 Writers, and of which there are many Instances in holy Writ. Thus those that rebelled, are called  
*the Children of Rebellion*, Numb. xvii. 10. Those  
 who commit Iniquity are called *the Children of Iniquity*, 2 Sam. iii. 34. 1 Chron. xvii. 9. Proud Men  
 by the same Figure are called *the Children of Pride*,  
 Job xli. 34. And those who were appointed or condemned to die are by David called *the Children of Death*, Psalm cii. 20. Those who were disobedient  
 are called *the Children of Disobedience*, Eph. ii. 2. and  
 because for this they are exposed to the Wrath of  
 God, they are in the next Verse called *the Children of Wrath*. And to instance but once more, those  
 who place their Trust, and have their Portion in this  
 present World, are by our Saviour called *the Children of this World*, Luke xvi. 8. And those who are in-  
 titled by their virtuous Actions to an Inheritance among  
*the Saints in Light*, are in the same Place called *the Children of Light*. Thus we see that, in Conformity  
 to the Genius of that Language which was spoken  
 by our blessed Saviour, those who were then wedded  
 to their Lord and Master, and to whom therefore the  
*Bride-Chamber* belonged, might, as such, be  
 called *the Children of the Bride-chamber*. And these  
 were the Disciples, of whom the Church consisted,  
 who

who were the only Persons that had a Right to be SERM.  
considered as the mystical Spouse of *Christ*. IX.

The Import therefore of our Saviour's Answer is   
this: *Can the Children of the Bride-chamber, i. e.* can  
my Disciples, espoused to me by a spiritual Relation,  
be expected to *mourn*, to afflict their Souls, or be in  
a Disposition to keep voluntary Fastings, while I  
their Bridegroom continue with them? Shall the  
Presence of a Husband banish Care and Sorrow, and  
shall not my Presence have the same Effect? The  
Time will soon come, when I must leave them to  
themselves, and then will they have Cause to *mourn*:  
Then will they fast and afflict their Souls, then will  
they practise the severer Duties, as well, you will  
find, and perhaps better too, than either you, or the  
strictest Pharisee. In the mean time it is my Plea-  
sure to indulge them for a little while, and to ex-  
empt them from the Burden of those harsher Duties,  
which then they will see Cause to practise. *The Days*  
*will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from*  
*them, and then shall they fast.*

This being, I think, the true Import of the Words,  
it ought to be observed, that our Saviour's Answer  
relates only to such Fasts as were free and voluntary,  
such as they observed and imposed upon themselves,  
without any Warrant or Authority from the Law.  
For all things contained in the Law of *Moses*, our  
Saviour himself, as might be shewn in many Instan-  
ces, and his Disciples also, while he lived among  
them, were in all Points very careful to observe.  
After his Ascension, Christianity commenced, and  
then much of the Law of *Moses* was abolished. But  
as long as he lived, neither He nor They ever held  
themselves excused from the strict Performance of  
any thing which was there required: From whence

SERM. we may conclude, that the Disciples of *John* were  
 IX. either ignorant what the Practice of our Saviour  
 was, and seeing that his Disciples did not fast when  
 they did, concluded falsely that they did not fast at  
 all; or else, when they put this Question to him,  
 meant only to ask why his Disciples did not fast so  
 often as either the Pharisees or themselves: Why  
 he did not teach and instruct his Followers, as their  
 Master had taught and instructed them, and as the  
 Pharisees also had taught their Disciples to keep  
 other Fasts of their own appointing, besides that  
 which the Law of *Moses* had enjoined. The keeping  
 of that which the Law of *Moses* had enjoined, was  
 a Thing in which they all agreed. The only Question  
 was, why our Lord's Disciples were not taught  
 by him to observe the same Days, and to be as regular  
 and constant in the Practice of this Duty, as  
 the Disciples of *John* and of the Pharisees: who,  
 besides that Fast which was instituted by *Moses*, observed  
 others also of their own voluntary Motion,  
 which they were not bound by the Law of *Moses* to  
 observe.

Secondly, we should take notice, that of these  
 voluntary Fasts, our Saviour does not say they are  
 superstitious in their own Nature, but only that they  
 were unseasonable for his Disciples. While he lived  
 among them, there was no Room for Sorrow. The  
 Presence of their Master was such a Blessing to them,  
 that it could not but dispose them, instead of mourning  
 and lamenting, to *rejoice and be exceeding glad*.  
 And considering the Afflictions they were afterwards  
 to undergo, he was pleased for a Season to indulge  
 them in this Joy, leaving them to be instructed, when  
 the Holy Ghost should come upon them, in what  
 Manner they were to sorrow for their Sins. In the  
 mean



mean time he was not wanting, by his Doctrine and **SERM.**  
Example, in any thing that might teach them what **IX.**

their Duty was in general, with respect to these Acts of Sorrow. Forty Days and forty Nights did he fast for their Sakes, teaching them thereby, that such Abstinence as they could bear was very proper at some Seasons to be observed. And it is further observable, that in his Sermon on the Mount, which consists of Rules on the most important Subjects, he has not omitted to give Directions to his Disciples about the Practice of private Abstinence or Fasting. For that what he there says, has no Regard to their Behaviour at the Time of publick Abstinence, the very Nature of the Precept shews; directing them when they fasted, to conceal it from the World, and to be as private in the Practice of it, as they could. To this may be added what our Saviour says here; *The Days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast, i. e.* they shall not only observe that Fast which, in Obedience to the Law of *Moses*, they observe already, but also such Fasts, as are meant in your Question, such Days of Abstinence as you prescribe to yourselves, and which therefore they may observe at whatsoever Seasons they shall judge most proper for them. And this leads me;

Thirdly, to another Observation, which is, That our Saviour, though he does not discommend, but countenance and encourage such religious Abstinence, as has nothing in it of Superstition on the one hand, nor of Ostentation and Vain-glory on the other, yet does not by these Words, nor indeed by any other, set apart either this, or any other Season for the Practice of this serious Duty. It has indeed been argued from these Words by some, that our  
Saviour

SERM. Saviour designed to lay a strict Injunction on his Disciples themselves, and all Christians after them,

IX. to keep a stated Fast at that Season of the Year,

*when the Bridegroom should be taken from them.* To this they have added, by another Inference from the

Example of our blessed Saviour, who fasted forty Days and forty Nights in the Wilderness, that this

anniversary Fast, supposed by them to be prescribed to all Christians in my Text, ought to be for the

same Space of Time. And on one of these Notions, or on both together, is that Doctrine founded in the

Church of *Rome*, which supposes us at this Season of the Year particularly, to be obliged to such an

Abstinence from some Kind of Food, that to fail in it is a mortal Sin. As to that Opinion, which so

rigorously restrains us from the Use of some Kinds of Food, allowing us with great Liberty to indulge

in others, it is too absurd to deserve an Answer. At present let us stick to the Subject we are upon. And,

*first*, with Regard to the Example of our Saviour, if from hence it be inferred, that because he fasted

forty Days, we also ought to fast for the same Space of Time, it is sufficient to reply, we cannot. Our

natural Appetites of Thirst and Hunger will confute this Notion for us. His Example indeed may be an

Argument sufficient to recommend to us Fasting in general: And so far it may be useful to us. But if

once we come to fancy that the Circumstances of Christ's Fasting must be a Precedent and Rule for

ours, we are tied up to all Circumstances alike. For what Right has one to be so strictly followed, while

another is neglected by us? We cannot fast in the same Manner that he did: Why then for the same

Space of Time? If it be said, that we are bound to follow his Example in every Circumstance that can be

imitated

imitated by us, why do we not retire, as he did, to a <sup>SERM.</sup> Wilderness? The Circumstance of Place is a Matter <sup>IX.</sup> of as much Consequence, as the Circumstance of Time can be: Nay indeed of more; for Solitude and Retirement in such a desolate Scene as *Christ* chose to fast in, may perhaps help to wean and disengage us from the World, as much as even Abstinence itself; whereas the Circumstance of Time, a Day less or more in the Number of Days which are devoted to this Purpose, cannot sure have any great Effect. But it is not pretended that to imitate our Saviour, it is necessary to seek a Wilderness or Desert. Why then should it be supposed, that in Compliance with his Example, it is necessary to fast forty Days? *Secondly*, with respect to that other Notion, that our Saviour has enjoined us in the Words of my Text, to keep a stated Fast at that Season of the Year, when he suffered and expired upon the Cross, this is more than our Saviour meant by them. His Design was to shew, that when he was gone, his Disciples *in those Days should fast*. He does not say, what Season of the Year, nor what Number of Days should be observed. And indeed if any Season had been appointed in these Words to be observed as a Time of publick Abstinence, it could not but have been a different Season from that which is, in Fact, at this Time observed. Had our Saviour's Words been understood by his Disciples, as a strict Injunction to keep a solemn Fast, beginning at the Time of his being taken from them, they would not have fasted, till he was crucified at least, nor probably till he ascended into Heaven, at which Time he took his last Farewel of them, and from thenceforth was to visit them no more. Had this been done, and continued yearly from either of the  
the

SERM. the abovementioned Periods, the forty Days of *Lent* must either have begun about the Time where now they end, or forty Days later still: For so long he continued to converse with his Disciples between the Time of his Resurrection and Ascension. And from hence it is clear, that the Custom of keeping Fast for Forty Days before the Festival of *Easter*, is neither founded on the Words of our Saviour in my Text, nor on the Practice of his first Disciples. But then withal it must be observed to its Advantage, that it is a Practice of very ancient Date, much sooner than the Times when the Leaven of Popery began to poison and infect the Church, and was probably begun early by the *Jewish* Converts, whose Custom it had been to observe forty Days to prepare them for the great Fast of Expiation. But whatever it was that gave Rise to it at first, it has ever since been continued in the Church, and is appointed to be observed by our own Church in particular, with whose Rules and Ordinances, as long as we continue Members of it, it is without question our Duty to comply. This Church hath limited a certain Number of Days, the same that hath generally, tho' not constantly, been observed by all Christians in other Ages of the World, to be employed in such Acts of Humiliation and Abstinence as are likely to help forward our Repentance, leaving it to every Person to practise it, or dispense with it, as his bodily Health, his worldly Business, or the Occasions of his Soul require. And on this Foot it is, even the Authority of our Superiors, who have limited the Time to be employed in this Duty, that our Obligation to observe it stands.

These are the Observations I had to offer upon my Text; it remains only, in the *last* Place, for the better Improvement of this holy Season, to consider

the



*The true Nature and End of Fasting.*

III

the Nature of religious Abstinence in general, and how far we are obliged to practise it.

SERM.  
IX.

The Act of Fasting, or abstaining from Food, considered by itself, without regarding the Cause of it, or the End we propose to gain by it, has nothing in it either good or evil. He that abstains for want of Appetite to eat, does a thing which is perfectly indifferent in itself, and can be called neither Vice nor Virtue. He that fasts with a Design to starve, to throw away the Life it hath pleased God to give him, and which therefore he is bound to preserve and keep, till it shall please the great Giver to resume it, does an evil Action, because the End is evil, it being done with Design to commit Murder on himself, which is an action that he cannot justify. He that fasts to give his Bread unto the Hungry; he that denies himself his own natural Food, to save the Life of his Fellow-Creature that is starving, performs a good Action, because his End is good, so far as he does it with a charitable Design, which makes it a true moral Virtue. Thus we see that Fasting may be good or evil, or it may be neither, but a Thing perfectly indifferent, according to the End proposed by it. The Question then is, what End we should propose, what Motives or Inducements ought to influence our Minds to make Fasting a religious Act. To set this Matter in the plainest Light: It is natural for Men under great Afflictions, when their Hearts are loaded and oppressed with Sorrow, to refuse all the Pleasures and Delights of Life, which they are glad at other Seasons to enjoy. Particularly they are apt to forsake their Food, and to have little Appetite or Inclination to it. Whatever is the Cause of such inward Sorrow, whether it be any worldly Calamity or Affliction, or whether it be the Sense of any Guilt contracted,

**SERM.** contracted, and the Fear of being punished for it, it will of course produce this Effect, and in proportion as our Grief is more and greater, this Aversion will be more violent and intense. So that Fasting, we find, or abstaining from Food, is a natural Expression or Indication of our Grief, from whatever Cause or Motive it proceeds. Whenever it proceeds from any worldly Motive, it is with respect to the Favour of God, a thing of no Consequence at all. But when it springs from a spiritual and godly Sorrow, from a Sense of having sinned and offended God, and a constant Uneasiness hanging over our Minds, till we are reconciled and have made our Peace with him, then it is an Act acceptable and well pleasing to him, not by any Virtue or Efficacy of its own (for surely he is not pleased to see his Creatures miserable) but for the sake of the good Principle it proceeds from. And this, it is probable, was what gave the first Rise to the Custom of endeavouring to avert God's Vengeance by this Method of religious Abstinence or Fasting.

But, secondly, When Men began to practise this, they soon found the Benefit and Advantage of so doing, by the good Effects and Consequences which flowed from it. That which proceeded from the first Motions of Repentance, did at last help to perfect and compleat it. Those Passions and Affections, which caused Men to commit Sin, were by much Abstinence so mortified and subdued, that for the future they had no Desire to commit it. The Flesh became weak, and the Spirit gathered Strength, and they found their Minds in a better Frame and Disposition for the Practice of all serious Duties. The Benefit of Abstinence being thus discovered, it began to be considered and observed by Men, as a proper Way to help forward their

their Repentance ; and those who were sorry for their past Offences, and sincerely desirous to forsake them for the time to come, had Recourse to this Method, to subdue their Lusts, and to raise their Affections from all sensual Delights, to a true Relish for more spiritual Enjoyments. And here again the Principle, upon which it was performed, recommended it to God's Favour and Acceptance ; not as a Duty that was necessary in itself, but as a good Way to promote Piety and Virtue, and as springing from a real and sincere Desire to forsake every thing displeasing to him. SERM. IX.

These, I think, are the only true Grounds on which Fasting can be considered as a religious Act: And from hence it will be easy to discover, in the last Place, how far we are obliged to practise it. It is not a Duty that is necessary for its own sake, it is not in itself acceptable to God, but as it naturally accompanies a sincere Repentance, and is a good Way to further and promote it. It is therefore to be ranked in the Number of those Duties, which are called auxiliary or instrumental Duties, which are to be considered as Means to some End, and which therefore are practised so far, and no farther, than they are necessary to attain that End. So far as Fasting is the Effect of Repentance, Men will fast of course, either more or less, in Proportion to their inward Sorrow. But so far as it is a Means to bring about Repentance, it ought to be performed with a View to that End, and can never be said to be done duly and sufficiently, till that End is accomplished by it. Here then is the Rule by which we ought to act, we must fast so long till this End is answered ; till the Flesh is subdued, and made subject to the Spirit, and we have lost all Desire and Inclination to those Vices

SERM. Vices which we used to take most Delight in. No-  
IX. thing can be called a religious Fast, that has not  
this Effect upon us, and therefore when such Fasts  
are observed at all, thus far we are obliged to keep  
them.

*Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c.*







*A Man's Christian Name his  
best Title.*

A

# S E R M O N

On 1 COR. i. i.

*Paul called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ.*



THESE Words, or others to the same SERM.

Effect, are the common Introduction X.

to most of those Epistles which were  
written by the great Apostle St. Paul.

Their Design was to shew both his  
Name and Office, the former setting forth who it  
was that wrote them, and the latter, by what Autho-  
rity they were written. In both there is something  
that may be worth observing; but as the Subjects are  
perfectly distinct from each other, at present I would  
discourse only of the former.

It is obvious to observe, that the Name of our  
Apostle, as written by himself here, and in the rest  
of his Epistles, is somewhat different from that which  
he had from the Beginning, and which was given him  
by his Jewish Parents. By them he was called *Saul*,  
and by that Name alone he seems to have been first  
known among his Countrymen the *Jews*; nor does it  
appear from Scripture, that he was called by any  
other,

SERM. other, till after the Time when, by God's Appointment, he was set apart to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. After this he is once mentioned by the same Name again; but with this Remark, that he was also called *Paul*; which Name he takes upon him, and is so styled by others, wherever he appears afterwards in holy Writ.

It may perhaps be thought a very needless Disquisition, and of very little Benefit to the Christian Hearer, How it came to pass that this Change was made, and at what Time, or for what Reasons it was done. But let not this be any Prejudice against it. For as the moral Parts of this Apostle's Writings abound with Precepts and Instructions of several Kinds, very necessary to be understood by Christians; so even the historical and circumstantial Passages are far from being useless Parts of them. His Cloke, his Parchments, and other private Matters, which some have been pleased to make the Subject of their Mirth, have afforded the considerate and attentive Reader proper Matter for his more serious Thoughts. Useful Points of Doctrine have been sometimes raised from them, and practical Applications made of them.

Now when Subjects of this kind, by being opened and explained, become serviceable to any Purpose of Religion, there is this further Benefit resulting from them, that every Instance of this kind helps to answer that Objection, which represents the Text of Scripture as in some Places frivolous, by shewing, that to a Mind disposed diligently *to read them, to learn, to mark, and inwardly to digest them*, there is nothing to be found in those sacred Writings; so barren as to afford no Instruction.

This being premised, I beg leave at present, with a View to some practical Observations that will rise from

from it, to make a few Remarks on the Name of SERM.  
our Apostle, with the Reason of its being changed, X.  
by the Alteration of a Letter from *Saul*, which was  
the Name by which he went among the *Jews*, to  
*Paul*, which is the Name written in my Text.

It is supposed by some, but without sufficient  
Grounds, that this Change was made by God's own  
Appointment, that he might not, says *St. Chrysostom*  
on the first Chapter to the *Romans*, be in this respect  
inferior to any other of the Apostles, but enjoy the  
same Honour, by which the chief of them, *St. Peter*,  
had before been distinguished by his Master. That  
*St. Paul* did enjoy as many great Advantages, in Point  
of Honour and Authority in the Church of Christ,  
as *St. Peter*, or any other of the Apostles, is a cer-  
tain Truth, which those who have had an Interest in  
raising *St. Peter's* Character in Diminution to the rest,  
have not been able by any Argument to disprove. But  
that the Changing of his Name could be done with  
this View, or that any such Purpose could be answered  
by it, it is not, I think, easy to understand.

For, *First*, had the Name of *Peter*, which Christ  
gave to *Simon*, been designed to convey to him any  
such Precedence, as this Opinion supposes him to  
have had, it is highly improbable, that the Autho-  
rity which did this, would have taken any Method to  
defeat itself, by raising another to the same Level  
with him.

*Secondly*, It is not true, that the new Name bestowed  
on him was designed to give *Peter* any such Prece-  
dence; which is a thing that, to support the Church  
of *Rome's* Supremacy, has since, for worldly Reasons,  
been ascribed to him. How then could the changing  
our Apostle's Name be designed to place him on the  
same Level with *St. Peter*, when even *St. Peter* had,  
by

SERM. by Virtue of that Name, obtained no such Pre-  
 eminence himself?

*W* *Thirdly*, In these Cases there is no true Resemblance. The Person who was distinguished by the Name of *Peter*, did not lose thereby the first Name he bore; but retained it with a new Name annexed to it: and with such a Name, as was significant of the Reason for which it was conferred upon him. *Thou art Peter*, says his blessed Master, *and on this Rock will I build my Church*, alluding to the Word, which imports a Rock in that Language from which the Name was taken. What is there like this in the Case now before us? The Name of *Saul*, which our Apostle had before, was not kept or retained, as that of *Simon* was, but lost and swallowed up in *Paul*: nor is the Name of *Paul*, which was substituted in its Room, expressive of any singular Advantage or Preeminence, which this Opinion in the other Case supposes, but a Name in common Use, and well known among the *Romans*, so far from asserting any Dignity to its Owner, that some, deriving it from a Word signifying in that Language *little*, suppose the Apostle took it in the Humility of his Soul, to testify the Sense he had of his own Meanness and Unworthiness, agreeable to that Profession which he makes elsewhere of himself, that he was in his own Account *the very least of the Apostles*, *not so much as meet to be called an Apostle*, *because he had persecuted the Church of God*.

*Lastly*, For this Opinion there is no Warrant in holy Writ: Yet the thing is in itself of so remarkable a Nature, that if true, it could not well have been omitted. The very Reason, for which it is supposed to have been done, is a Reason also, why it ought to have been recorded: as it would effectually have destroyed the very Ground and Foundation of those  
 false



false Pretensions to universal Monarchy, by which the Church of *Rome* has established its Dominion over the Consciences and Souls of Men. Not that we want Arguments to confute that Claim, which has nothing but a Train of Falshoods for its Support. But had God been pleased to declare in Scripture, that this Apostle's Name had been so changed by him, on purpose to shew, that in no Respect at all St. *Peter* was superior to him, this would have been an Argument so demonstrative and convincing, as to have cut off the very Claim itself. If no Evidence appears, that such a thing was done, there is no arguing that it was done from its Usefulness and Expedience for the Conviction of those by whom the Claim was made: But if it had been done, he who did it with this View, and must needs foresee that such a Claim there would be, could not fail, for the same Reason, to have preserved its Memory for the Benefit of succeeding Ages. St. *Paul* had Cause enough, in Vindication of himself against those who would have sunk his Character, to magnify his Office, by insisting on his Equality with the rest of his Fellow-labourers in the Gospel. He tells the *Corinthians*, that, as little as he was, *in nothing he was behind the very chiefest Apostles*; yet never does he insist on this Evidence in support of it, which, if true, was the best Argument he could have used.

This Opinion therefore having no Foundation, Others, to account for this Matter, have supposed, that the Apostle had been accustomed to both Names from his Childhood: That one of them might be given him, at the Time of his Circumcision, to intimate his Descent from the same honourable Tribe with *Saul* the first King of *Israel*; and that the other, which was a Name in common Use among the Ro-

mans,

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SERM. *mans*, might be given him, to shew that he was en-

X. titled by his Birth to the Privileges of a *Roman* Citizen. One of these Privileges we find him pleading for himself, in the Twenty second Chapter of the *Acts*, where he asks the Centurion, who was about to scourge him, *whether it was lawful to scourge a man that was a Roman; a Roman by Birth*, as he tells the Tribune afterwards, probably because his Parents, tho' *Jews* themselves, had, in recompence for some Services which they had done the State, been admitted to that honourable Title. Others have thought, because the Name of *Paul* is never mentioned in Scripture, till that memorable Account of his striking *Elymas* the famous Sorcerer with Blindness, thereby converting the Governor of the Place, whose Name was *Sergius Paulus*, to Christianity, that St. *Paul* took upon him, in Memory of that Action, the Name of the *Roman* Governor he had converted. Others understand, that the Name of *Saul*, being a *Jewish* Name, and very little heard of among the Gentiles he was sent to preach to, they changed it into *Paul*, which was better known to them, in like manner as he, who was *Jesus* among the *Jews*, was called among the *Grecians* *Jason*. Many other Instances of like Nature are produced, by which it appears, that Names in one Language have been often thus changed to a Word of like Sound, to render them more agreeable to another; and from hence it is inferred, that this may be the Case with respect to the Name now before us.

It is not material among these Opinions, which of them is most likely to be true. But this may be observed, that whatever be the Case, whether the Name of *Paul* was taken up by himself, or whether it was first given him by others, it is the Name by which

which he chose to be known as an Apostle, having generally prefixt it to those Epistles, which were written by him both to Churches and to private Persons. And for this, I think, three Reasons may be assigned.

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One is, because by God's own Appointment he was set apart to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, among whom there is no doubt, but a Gentile Name must needs be more agreeable than a *Jewish*. He therefore, who would lose no Advantage that was offered to recommend and enforce his Doctrine, might naturally be led to make use of that Name, which he found would be most acceptable among them.

If this may be allowed, it will help to solve the difficulty, which lies against the Notion that the Epistle to the *Hebrews* was the Work of this great Apostle. To this it is objected, that if he had been its Author, he would most probably have prefixed his Name to it, which was his constant Custom in the rest of his Epistles; and therefore since it is not so prefixed to this, it is not likely to have been written by him. But now if it be supposed, that one Reason, among others, which induced this Apostle to wear a Gentile Name, was to render himself more acceptable to the Gentile World, and to gain his Doctrine a more favourable Reception; this might be a thing so disobliging to the *Jews*, that he might purposely omit it in his Address to them, to prevent the Prejudice that it might have raised against him. That this was his Principle, and his Practice in like Cases, he himself informs us in this Epistle to the *Corinthians*. *For tho', says he, I be free from all men, yet have I made myself a servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the Law,*

SERM. as under the Law, that I might gain them that are under  
 X. the Law; to them that are without Law, as without  
 ~~~~~ Law, that I might gain them that are without Law. To  
 the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak:
 I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means
 save some.

From hence it would be well, if all Christians would take Example to treat one another with the same Christian Spirit, the same winning Softness, the same Tenderness and Condescension, the same meek and mild and peaceable Behaviour, if it were but to gain one another's Love, and to promote Peace and Unity in the Church. A little of the Apostle's most engaging Goodness, in complying with the little Prejudices and Infirmities of other men, not exasperating and inflaming them by a fierce Resistance, but endearing ourselves to them by such slight Submissions, as might easily be made without Shipwreck of our Faith, or without betraying any Interest of Religion, would doubtless do more towards bringing them to a right Mind, than all the other Methods that can be used: much more, I am sure, than that furious Zeal which was exerted by our Apostle, while he continued to be a Jew, but, as soon as he became a Christian, was forgotten. He that had *breathed out Slaughter against the Church*, was, immediately upon imbibing the mild Spirit of the Gospel, all Gentleness, Love and Sweetness; setting an Example to all other Christians, in what manner they should treat their Brethren; in what Sense it is, that they should follow him, in like manner as he followed Christ, who said, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly*; and then, by giving Rest unto the Souls of others, *ye shall also find Rest unto your own*.

But,

But, *Secondly*, Another Reason, which might induce SERM.
the Apostle to take another Name upon him, might X.
probably be this: The Judaizing Christians gave 
great Disturbance to the Gentile Converts, persuading
them, that unless they were circumcised and kept the
Law, they could not be admitted to that spiritual
Deliverance, which *Christ Jesus* had accomplished for
them. Against these Impressions the Apostle in his
Writings seems to take great Care to guard them:
And it is not improbable, that when he went among
them, he might change that Name, which was given
him at his Circumcision, to shew how little Strefs he
laid on it; to convince them that he had parted,
together with his Name, from all the boasted Privi-
leges of the *Jews*; that tho' he was *a Hebrew as well*
as they; *Tho' he was an Israelite, as well as they*; *of*
the Seed of Abraham, as well as they; yet these things
in his Account were not worth the Naming; he did
utterly disclaim all Benefit and Advantage, to which
he might be thought to have been intitled by them,
having placed his whole Confidence in Christ. This
he does very frequently and very solemnly declare:
But because on some Occasions, in Compliance with
the *Jews*, he had done things himself, which might
raise some Suspicion, that he was not quite averse to
these Judaizing Doctrines; it was therefore incum-
bent on him, by all Methods in his Power, to remove
this Suspicion from him: And as it is too visible and
notorious in the World, that weak Minds are much
affected by Appearances, it might, in this View, be
thought advisable by the Apostle, to give them a
standing proof of his Opinion in this matter, by
changing the very Name he bore, thereby renouncing,
in the most publick manner, all Trust and Confidence

SERM. in the ceremonial Law, which in Christ was quite
X. abrogated, and annulled.

And from hence we may learn, that in all matters of Importance, when any Service can be done to the Interests of Religion, by an open Declaration of our Principles and Opinions, and by a vigorous Opposition to those Persons who would subvert it, a good man is not at Liberty to disguise his Sentiments, but bound to stand up in the Defence of his Religion with a more open and unreserved Zeal. It were much to be wished, that all Sects and Parties, all Marks and Titles of Distinction among Christians, were utterly extinguished and laid aside. But since this cannot be, however we are obliged to treat one another with all Christian Charity, no Charity can oblige us, in case of Danger to ourselves, to be quite passive and indifferent to our religious Interests, in deference to those of other men. The Profession of Religion in their own Way and Manner, is what ought to tender Consciences to be indulged: But when this is done, and under this Pretence we are required to proceed further still, and by granting to *them more than their religious Rights, run the risque of being beaten from our own*, it is time to stop short, and to secure ourselves; however, for so doing, we may be falsely censured, as either Persecutors, or contentious men. It is not to be doubted but the Judaizing Christians, whose Notions were more rigid than St. Paul's, were apt enough to defame him, as an Enemy to the Law of *Moses*, which they, it seems, were very zealous to recommend. But, tho' he would gladly have given none Offence, neither to the *Jews*, nor to the *Gentiles*, as himself informs us, nor to any of the Church of God, yet because it was impossible to please all he
had

had to do with, he was therefore compelled to de- SERM.
clare openly for the Gentiles, in opposition to the X.
precise Notions of the Jews, who would fain have
laid a Yoke upon their Brethren's Necks, *which nei-*
ther they nor their Forefathers could bear. Thus was he
content, for the good of many, for the sake of Re-
ligion, and for the sake of Christ, to do that which
he knew would give Offence to some, and expose him
to their Censure and Reproach. And every man, who
acts on the same Principle as he did, will be obliged,
as often as there are any Differences in the Church,
to act in the same manner too. But,

Thirdly and Lastly, Another Reason, and perhaps
the chief, which might induce this Apostle to affect
the Name of *Paul*, was to testify his Concern for
what had happened to the Church, while he acted in
his *Jewish* Character. The furious and intemperate
Zeal he had exerted, before he was made a Profelyte
to the Christian Faith, might raise so much Sorrow
and Compunction afterwards, that, to shew what a
thorough Change and Reformation was wrought in
him, he might desire his former Name might be for-
gotten: He might set so great a Value on the new
Character he had acquired, as, in Memory of his
Conversion, to affect this Name, signifying, that he
was no longer the same Person he was before; that
he quitted all Advantages he had ever been possess of,
and desired to be considered in no other Light, than
that wherein Christ had placed him. *Paul called to*
be an Apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God.

The Use we may make of this, is, to learn from
his Example to set a just and due Value on our
Christian Names, and to consider them, with him,
as the highest Marks of Honour, by which we can
be distinguished upon Earth. The Character of a

SERM. Christian is a much greater Character, a more exalted

X. Title, a more honourable Distinction, than any other
 ~~~~~ that can be claimed by man: And he that has a just  
 Sense of the benefits conveyed with it, will always  
 esteem it the highest Privilege and Honour, the  
 greatest Glory that in this World he can attain. St.  
*Paul*, we find, who himself assures us he had many  
 other things whereof to glory, laid them all aside,  
 and counted them of no worth, *that he might glory*  
*in the Cross of Christ*. That Cross, it seems, which  
 had been a *Stumbling-Block to the Jews*, and by the  
 Greeks had been accounted *Foolishness*, was in his  
 esteem a better Claim to Glory, than either his  
 Birth, or his Learning gave him. He might have  
 gloried in his *Jewish Titles*, being circumcised the  
*eighth day, of the Stock of Israel, of the Tribe of*  
*Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching*  
*the Law, a Pharisee; concerning Zeal, persecuting the*  
*Church; touching the Righteousness which is in the Law,*  
*blameless*: He might have gloried in his Learning,  
 or Education as a *Jew*, having been bred, as he tells  
 us, *at the Feet of Gamaliel*, and being well acquainted,  
 as appears from his Writings, with the Learning  
 which then flourished among the *Greeks*. But *what*  
*things were Gain to him*, as he tells us in the same  
 place, *all these he counted Loss for Christ*. Thus we see,  
 what others would have been proud of having, he  
 was proud, if I may so speak, of losing: He was  
 pleased, he was transported: It was his Comfort,  
 his Delight, his Glory and his Crown of Rejoicing.

And what shall we say, who are Christians as well  
 as he, who have all the same Reason and the same  
 Title that he had, thus to triumph in the Cross of  
 Christ, if in an Age over-run with Infidelity and Pro-  
 phaneness, we are indifferent to the sacred Interests

of



of the Gospel? if we patiently submit to hear it vilified and blasphemed; or, which is no less shameful, by the wickedness of our Lives give advantage to those who labour to destroy it? Let us remember that we are Christians; a Title which imports, that we have *put off the old man with his Affections and Lusts, and are renewed in the Spirit of our Minds.* Let us shew and convince those, who, in opposition to the Gospel, would deprive us of the Succours of divine Grace in Christ, persuading us to rely on the mere Strength of Nature, what Advantages the true Christian has; and to what heights of Virtue that man may rise, whose Weaknesses and Infirmities are sustained by Grace, and who acts with eternal Happiness before him. Let us never, my Brethren, lay aside these Thoughts: Let us always cherish and preserve them in us. For if any thing can stir us up to a Zeal for God's Glory, and to every other Virtue that is commendable in man, it must be this Reflection, that we are Christians by Profession; that we have promised and engaged to forsake our Lusts, to resist the Devil, to bid Defiance to the World, to combat and oppose every Difficulty or Obstruction, that would hinder us in our Passage to that State of Glory, which it hath pleased God, in *Christ Jesus*, to propose to us. Let us always be ashamed, with these Views before us, to do any thing unworthy of the great Character we assume: And if worldly Greatness be an Argument with some, to do nothing that may stain their Honour, let this spiritual Greatness be an Argument with us, to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we have been called, to adorn our Profession, and, by the brightness of our Example, bring back to the great Shepherd and Physician of our Souls those unhappy Wanderers, who are at first offended by

X.

SERM. the dissolute and wicked Lives of Christians, and then

X. become a prey to the cunning Craftiness of those, who, too successfully, lie in wait to deceive.

In short, whatever treatment Christianity may receive, let its true Professors be still zealous to maintain it. For *whosoever shall be ashamed of Christ or his Doctrine, in this wicked and corrupt Generation, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed hereafter, when he shall come in the Clouds of Heaven, as his Judge: But for them, who by patient continuance in well doing shall seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality, there is laid up a Crown of Righteousness in Heaven.*

*Which the good God grant we may all receive, thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, both now, and for evermore.*





*We must not Judge others by what  
they suffer.*

A

# S E R M O N

Preached at St. James's.

LUKE xiii. 2, 3, 4, 5.

*And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye, that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?*

*I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

*Or those eighteen, upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, Think ye that they were Sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem?*

*I tell you, Nay: But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*



IT has been always observed as a SERMON Weakness in human Nature, that we XI. are apt, upon all Occasions, to censure the Faults of others, and in the mean time to be inattentive to our own. Against this, many Rules and Precepts have been directed by those, who have undertook to in-

SERM. struct the World in the Principles of Moral Wisdom.

XI. Among the rest, our blessed Saviour, in his Sermon

on the Mount, thought it a Subject too considerable to be omitted ; expressing himself with some Warmth and Indignation against those, who were apt to discover *Motes* in the Eyes of others, and yet could not perceive *Beams* in their own. Notwithstanding this, we find in this Chapter some Persons, that in his Hearing were guilty of the same Fault, upon the Occasion of an Accident which, it seems, had happened to some of his reputed Countrymen the *Galileans*, intimating, as one may judge from the answer Christ makes, that they looked upon it as an Instance of God's high Displeasure, and as a Punishment inflicted on them for their Sins. *There were*, says the Evangelist, *present at that Season some who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices, i. e. whom Pilate, for adhering to a Set of Men, who had declared it unlawful to pay Tribute to Cæsar, had taken Occasion, as they were sacrificing, to destroy. To this our Saviour answers in the words of my Text, Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, Think ye that they were Sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* From which words of our Saviour, taken all together, it looks as if those who made this Reflection were led to it by the Prejudices, they had conceived against the Country, to which the unhappy Sufferers belonged, and as if they were the more forward to surmise the worst, because those who had thus perished



rished were *Galileans*, the Inhabitants of a Country, SERM.  
XI. to which it is well known the *Jews* had a very great Dislike. To remove which Prejudice, and to teach them to judge charitably with respect to Mankind in general, our Saviour so frames and contrives his Answer, as to inform them, that the Accident which had happened to these men, was neither owing to their being Sinners, nor *Galileans*. The first of which Assertions is exprest in plain Terms, and the second is implied in that part of his Discourse, in which he produces another Instance of the same kind, which had happened among the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, where no less than eighteen Persons had been destroyed together by the Accident of a Tower's falling upon their Heads. By which Example he not only enforces the same Doctrine he had advanced before, but does further inform them, that what had happened to the *Galileans*, did not happen to them, *because they were Galileans, since they found that Misfortunes of the same kind with theirs, befel those of their own Country too.* After which he proceeds to repeat the Admonition he had before given them, of the Danger they were in, assuring them *that if they did not repent of their Sins, they should all in like manner perish.*

Some have understood the Destruction here threatened, as spoken of that final Destruction in the next World, which is often call'd in Scripture *perishing*. For indeed it was true, that if they did not repent, *they should all likewise in that Sense perish.* But others have understood it, upon better Grounds, to have respect to the temporal Destruction of that People, which our Saviour has elsewhere foretold; and which agrees much better with his Expression in this Place, importing, that they should suffer in the same

SERM. same Way and Manner with those who were before-  
 XI. mentioned in my Text. For the Way, by which  
 these Men are said to have suffered, was only by a  
 temporal, and not by an eternal Death. And there-  
 fore in this Sense it is most natural to understand the  
 Punishment here threatned to them. However, as  
 the Assertion in that other Sense is not only true, but  
 very useful Doctrine, I shall not confine myself to  
 either of these Senses, so far as to exclude the other :  
 but so treat the Words in the following Discourse, as  
 if both were intended by them.

The first thing I would shew, in pursuance of this  
 Subject, is, that temporal Evils, and particularly  
 that of Death, are sometimes inflicted by the Provi-  
 dence of God, as a Punishment for Perseverance in  
 Sin.

Secondly, That they are not always inflicted with  
 this View, but are sometimes intended, though we  
 call them Evils, for the Benefit of those who suffer.

From whence I shall infer, Thirdly, That to take  
 Occasion from them to censure and defame the Suf-  
 ferer, is an uncharitable and unchristian Practice.  
 And then just observe,

Fourthly, That the Use which we ought to make  
 of them, is to take Warning from them to amend  
 our Lives, lest we also in like Manner perish.

First then, I am to shew, that all temporal Evils,  
 and particularly Death, which is the last and greatest  
 of them, are sometimes inflicted by God's Providence  
 as a Punishment for Perseverance in Sin.

This Proposition seems naturally to be inferred  
 from the Judgment which Christ threatens in my  
 Text, where he tells the *Jews*, that if they did not  
 repent, they should all suffer in like Manner as the  
*Galileans*, and in like Manner as their Countrymen,  
 who

who were crushed to Death by the Tower which fell SERM.  
 down upon their Heads: Which Prophecy of our XI.  
 Saviour was exactly verified in the Slaughter of that  
 People, and the Destruction of their City, by the  
 Arms of the Emperor *Vespasian*: And it is observed  
 by some Writers, that this Event was attended with  
 some Circumstances, to which our Saviour may be  
 supposed to have had an Eye, in the Passage which  
 is now before us. The Slaughter of this People,  
 like that of the *Galileans*, was executed by a *Roman*  
 Power: It happened on the Day when they were  
 celebrating their Passover, and sacrificing the Paschal  
 Lamb, at which Time it is probable, that the Blood  
 of the slain might be mingled, like theirs, with their  
 Sacrifices. It was done at *Jerusalem*, in which Cir-  
 cumstance it resembled both the Instances of Destruc-  
 tion in my Text: And it is not improbable, that  
 many of the Inhabitants, like the eighteen Persons  
 who are mentioned in my Text, were overwhelmed  
 in the Destruction of their Citadels and Towers, and  
 buried in the Ruins of them.

Now the Reason assigned for the Overthrow of  
 this People, is, their final Impenitence, and Dis-  
 obedience to God, in opposition to the Voice of the  
 Messengers he had sent to reclaim them from the  
 Errors of their Ways. In this Instance therefore it  
 is evident, that God inflicted a temporal Evil, no  
 less than that of Death, as a Punishment for Conti-  
 nuance in Sin. If it be said, that the Method of  
 God's Dealing with the *Jews* was peculiar to the  
 state of that People in particular, and cannot be  
 drawn into Precedents by us, who are governed by  
 very different Laws; to this it may be answered,  
 that though the Acts of God's Providence are in-  
 deed at this time less visible and conspicuous, yet  
 they

SERM. they are not less certain than they were then: It is

XI. true, that God's Judgments were executed on this  
 ~~~~~ People, in a much more remarkable and exemplary  
 Manner, than upon any that ever lived upon the
 Earth; Temporal Prosperity and Success in their
 Undertakings, being the Reward which was pro-
 mised to their Obedience; and Temporal Evil, such
 as bodily Diseases, the Pestilence, the Sword, and the
 Loss of Liberty, being denounced to them as the
 Punishment of their Sins. Under this Oeconomy, it
 was necessary for God's Providence so visibly to in-
 terpose in their secular Affairs, that as often as they
 transgressed, they might read their Punishment in
 the Fortune which was subsequent thereupon. When
 it pleased God to make a better Covenant with
 Man, when *Life and Immortality were brought to*
Light, and the Rewards and Punishments of another
 World were set in a clear View before us, the Rea-
 son of this Conduct ceased. There was no need to
 induce Men to the Practice of their Duty by temporal
 Rewards and Punishments, because stronger and
 better Motives were proposed. But does it therefore
 follow, that God ceases to interpose in the Govern-
 ment of our Actions, the Direction of Events, and
 the Distribution of Good and Evil in this World?
 His Judgments may be more secret and unsearch-
 able than they were; it may not be so easy to dis-
 cover his Designs, and to see the Connexion between
 the Punishment and the Sin, as it was in those Times,
 when such Motives were wanting to confine Men
 within the Bounds of their Duty. But it cannot be
 inferred against the Truth of Facts, that therefore
 there is no Punishment on this side the Grave;
 much less, that Sinners are not sometimes cut off in
 the Height of their Impiety, when they are ripe for
 Judg-

Judgment, and sent to account for their past Behaviour, with the whole Load of their Iniquity upon their Heads. For if we do but consider the known Attributes of God, it is impossible that his Providence should ever be excluded from the Management of any Accident or Event. If therefore it is evident, that the Wicked do suffer, if temporal Evils do sometimes befall them, if they are seen to drop off, and to be carried to their Graves in a State of Impenitence and Rebellion against God, this cannot be done without God's Permission, nor indeed without his Counsel and Design. That such things happen, Experience tells us: Nor can we well be ignorant in some flagrant Instances, of the Characters of those who suffer. When Men are openly and notoriously wicked, as some are without Cover or Disguise, it is no Breach of Charity to suppose them wicked, but agreeable to the Rule which our Saviour gives us: *By their Fruits ye shall know them.* When therefore by their Fruits they are thus discovered, when their Actions are exposed to publick View, and their Vices as well known as their Sufferings; in this Case they afford us a most convincing Evidence, that temporal Evils are sometimes inflicted by God's Providence for Perseverance in Sin. For whether these Evils are the natural Effects and Consequences of Sin committed, or whether they proceed from some other Cause, that has no visible Relation to it, they are still the Effect of God's sovereign Power, who has, in some Cases, by a natural Chain so coupled the Punishment and the Sin together, that one necessarily draws on the other, and in some Cases is observed to bring about his Ends by more unpromising and unlikely Methods. But in both these Cases, God's Hand is most certainly concerned: For nothing can be done without it. Now

SERM. Now when temporal Evils are inflicted, on such

XI. Persons, as do not make a proper Use of them, but continue in their Sins and despise Correction, esteeming it perhaps the Effect of Chance, and not of God's Goodness to them, it is plain, that the Sufferings which these Men endure, can to them be nothing else but Punishments. To others they may be a Warning to forsake their Sins; but to themselves, I say, who make no such Use of them, they can be nothing else but Punishments: Especially when they are overtaken and surpris'd by Death, the last temporal Evil that can befall them, this cannot but be considered as the greatest of all Punishments they can suffer on this side the Grave, and indeed as the Beginning of that endless Punishment, which is reserved for such Men hereafter.

But, Secondly, Though this be sometimes the Case, we are not to understand, that any temporal Evil is always inflicted with this only View; but that sometimes they are intended, though we call them Evils, for the Benefit of those who suffer. Many are the Examples of this kind in Scripture, many in the Histories of those holy Martyrs, that have suffered for the Name of Christ. Not to mention the Sufferings of our Lord himself, whose Example in this kind is the less fit to be here urged, because the *Chastisement of our Peace was upon him*, and to him were imputed, though innocent in his own Person, the Sins of Mankind in general. But it was not so with other holy Persons, who have suffered Persecution, in all Ages of the World, for the sake of Truth and Innocence. *Their* Example is doubtless an Argument, in this Case, against which no Exception can be made. Such were the Afflictions of *Job* and *Joseph*, of *David* and *Daniel*, and many others, in
holy

holy Writ, whose Stories, the Apostle tells us, *were* SERM.
written for our Learning, that we, through Patience XL
and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope. Such
 also were the Sufferings of that Apostle himself, and
 of all his Brethren and Fellow-Labourers in the
 Lord, who trod in the Steps of the great Captain of
 their Salvation, and like him were *made perfect*
through Sufferings. And such, without doubt, are
 the Poverty and Sickness, the Pain, the Sorrow, the
 Contempt, the Shame, and all the other Sufferings
 of many righteous and good Persons now. These
 are so far from being meant as Punishments, that
 they are in truth the greatest Blessings that can befall
 them. Good Men may sometimes be so elevated
 and transported by a Sense of their own Innocence
 and Virtue, that it may be necessary for their own
 sakes, to keep them humble and obedient, by the
 wholesome Discipline of Adversity and Distress. *The*
Thorn in the Flesh, that was given to St. Paul, the
Messenger of Satan that was sent to buffet him, (by
 which we are probably to understand some malicious
 Persecutor, that it pleased God to raise up against
 him) was, according to the Account which himself
 has given of it, intended for this Purpose only. And
 surely it is a very kind and gracious Dispensation, by
 a short Affliction, *which endureth but for a Moment*,
 to mortify a Passion, which, if it were to be indulged,
 might sink us in eternal Misery. Prosperity is apt to
 captivate and ensnare the Heart, tempting us, by
 degrees, from the Love of God and Virtue, and
 placing our Affections, which ought to rise to Hea-
 ven, on the low Pleasures of this present Life. To
 deliver us from these Dangers, God is pleased some-
 times to deprive us of those things which are most
 dear and valuable; that we may learn to set our
 Hearts

SERM. Hearts on those heavenly Enjoyments, that will infinitely overpay the Loss of them. Thus are the seeming Evils and Calamities of Life, by an infinitely wise and most gracious God, converted into real Blessings: and the Righteous have great Reason to return Thanks to God for those things, which would be thought Hardships by the Wicked, as well knowing, if they can but weather out the Storms, to which this Life is unavoidably exposed, he will guide and conduct them by his holy Spirit, *till they arrive at the Haven where they would be.* And from hence we may observe, *lastly*, that even Death itself, which, when it is an Evil, is the worst Evil we can suffer, is to good men the Consummation of their Happiness, according to that comfortable and chearful Doctrine, revealed to St. John by a Voice from Heaven, *Blessed are the Dead, which die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit; that they may rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.* They rest from their Labours, that is, they are delivered from the disturbances of this present Life, and their Works do follow them, and cause them to be accepted at the Judgment-Seat of Christ. Here it will be seen, whether the Evils of this Life have been Punishments or Blessings to us. Here it will appear, who have suffered for their Sins, and who for the sake of Righteousness; who have improved under God's Corrections, and to whom they have been sent in vain. In the mean time it will be best to suspend our Judgments, and not to be over-forward in such Points as these; but remember the Advice of our blessed Saviour, *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Which leads me to observe,

Thirdly, That for any men to take occasion from any temporal Evil that befalls their Brethren, to censure

sure and defame the Sufferer, is an uncharitable and SERM.
 unchristian Practice.

XI.

This will appear from what has been observed in my Discourse on the foregoing Heads. For if it be true, that all temporal Evils are inflicted, sometimes as a Punishment for Sin, and sometimes to preserve us from it; if it be true, that some men are cut off in their Sins, as *Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction*, and others are carried off from this evil World to a State of Rest and Peace and Safety: it follows, that there is no judging from any Accident or Disaster, that can possibly befall another, that therefore he was a wicked man; since Troubles and Disappointments, Afflictions and Persecutions must needs happen to all men promiscuously, to the Wicked as a Terror and Discouragement to Vice, and to the Good, to secure their Virtue. From what a man *does*, we may make a Judgment of his Guilt; but from what he *undergoes*, we cannot. The former is a Rule that Christ has given us; and therefore we may use it safely: But the latter is a Rule of our own *inventing*; and which nothing but our want of Charity can suggest. Our Saviour, you see, has discountenanced it in my Text, telling those who were so forward to make Misconstructions to the disadvantage of the unfortunate *Galileans*, that there was nothing in their Sufferings, nor in those of other People, from which it could be inferred, that they were greater Sinners than those who had the Fortune to survive them; and thereby checking that malicious Spirit, which is apt to break out in unjustifiable Liberties with respect to other People's Characters, admonishing them withal, *that if they did not repent, they should all in like manner perish*. From whence I shall take occasion to proceed to my

Fourth

SERM. Fourth Head; That the Use, which we ought

XI. to make of all temporal Calamities, which are inflicted by God's Providence on others, is, to take Warning from them to amend our own Lives, lest we also *in like Manner perish*. It is the Property of true Wisdom, from every thing which occurs, to draw something for our own Benefit and Advantage. Whatever Observations we make on others, if they are not directed to this useful Purpose, are in truth of no Consequence or Importance. And yet if one were to judge from the Practice of the World, one would think that the only End and Design of Knowledge, was to enable us to make shrewd and severe Reflexions on the Conduct of other men. God knows, there is room enough, and too much for Censure in the Lives of the most upright men. But is there any Wisdom, or any Virtue, or any thing else, that is praise worthy, in being ready upon all Occasions to expose them? Let those whom we thus censure, be as guilty as we please: It will not excuse us, if, notwithstanding this, we are guilty of any Faults ourselves: Whatever becomes of *them*, howsoever they are dealt with, whatever they *suffer*, or whatever they deserve, there is no Question but we are all accountable for ourselves. We are not to answer at the Throne of God for any Sins or Misdeeds of theirs. We shall have enough to do to justify our *own Actions*, and to excuse our *own Conduct there*. Little shall we be concerned about the Fate of others, any further than a charitable Disposition may incline us to wish well to the whole Race of men. In the mean time, whatever Hardships and Severities we escape, that are inflicted upon our Christian Brethren: we should first make it Matter of Praise and Thanksgiving, that we are rescued
and

and delivered by God's gracious Providence from the SERM.
 Multitude of Disasters, Afflictions and Calamities, XL
 that are sent among the Sons of men; that under
the Covering of his Wings, and through his Protection,
 we need not be afraid for any Terror by Night, nor for
 the Arrow that flieth by Day; for the Pestilence that
 walketh in Darkness, nor for the Destruction that walk-
 eth at Noon-day: that notwithstanding our great and
 manifold Transgressions, he is pleased to spare the
 Rod, and to call us to Repentance and Amendment
 of Life, not by our own but other People's Suffer-
 ings. To this End, in the last Place, we should la-
 bour to concur with these his most gracious Purposes;
 and consider that if his Justice had been extreme to
 mark the Sins that have been committed by us; the
 worst of those Evils that other men have suffered,
 might possibly have been inflicted on us; That the
 Patience and Forbearance, which has hitherto been
 shewn us, as it is more perhaps than we have asked of
 God, more certainly than we have deserved to find,
 so it is more than the Impenitent can expect: And
 that those who despise the Riches of God's Goodness, do
 but treasure up to themselves Wrath against the Day of
 Wrath, which will come at last, however it be de-
 ferred, and overwhelm them with a most sure De-
 struction. And which now should we chuse? to
 afflict our Souls with a Sense of these things at pre-
 sent, or to suffer the worst that God's Vengeance
 can inflict, when he pours out the Vials of his Wrath
 upon us? Who can find Words to set forth the Dif-
 ference between the Sorrow for Sin, that is now re-
 quired, and the Sorrow for Punishment, the Remorse
 of Conscience, the Agonies of Pain, the Terror,
 the Despair, that shall torture the wicked Soul for
 ever? It is a fearful thing, my beloved Brethren, to
 fall

SERM. *fall into the Hands of the living God; whose Wrath is*

XI. *as dreadful, whose Vengeance as severe, as his Good-*
ness is great and wonderful. This is the Time to
make use of Mercy. It will be too late to knock,
when the Doors are shut: Too late to cry for Mercy,
when it is the Time of Justice. God grant, that all
Sinners may lay this to Heart, and seriously consider
how short their Time is, that they may understand
both the Judgment and Loving-kindness of the Lord,
and in good Time lay hold of Mercy, through the
Merits and Mediation of him that has redeemed us,
even Jesus Christ our Lord,

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy
Ghost, &c.





*A Posthumous Fame not worth
the Seeking.*

A

S E R M O N

On GEN. V. 25, 26, 27.

*And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and
seven Years, and begat Lamech.*

*And Methuselah lived, after he begat La-
mech, seven hundred eighty and two Years,
and begat Sons and Daughters.*

*And all the Days of Methuselah were nine
hundred sixty and nine Years, and he died.*



CRITICAL Dissertation concern-SERM.

ing the Age of the Patriarchs would XII.

be a Subject of so little Use in a po-
pular Discourse, that I do not think it
worth insisting on. I shall therefore
but just observe, that the Years, by

which *Moses* reckon'd, were neither *Egyptian* nor *Ara-
bian* Years, the latter of which consisted but of six
Months, and the former but of thirty Days. But
they were Years nearly, though not exactly of the
same

SERM. same Length with ours: And consequently the
 XII. Age of *Methuselah* was, according to *our* Account,
 very little different from that which is allotted him
 in my Text.

I shall not trouble you with my Reasons for this Opinion, thinking it will be of more Benefit to all of us to raise a few practical Observations upon the Subject, that may have an Influence upon our Lives and Manners.

First then, you may observe, that the short Account, which I have read to you, is all that the divine Wisdom has been pleased to tell us concerning the oldest of the Sons of Men. That at the Age of one Hundred and Eighty seven he begat a Son called *Lamech*, that after this he begat other Sons and Daughters, that he lived nine Hundred Sixty nine Years, and that he died. This is the whole History of his Life and Actions; and this is a true Picture of the Generality of Mankind, who think themselves of great Consequence in the World. They marry and are given in Marriage, they perform the common Offices of Nature; they eat, and drink, and die: And all that their Posterity is like to know of them, is the Number of Years they lived, the Names of the Children they begot, and perhaps the Sum total of the Wealth they left behind them, after a painful and penurious Life. Now who would wish for such a Fame as this, or who would desire to be so impertinently remembred, for Circumstances which do no Honour to his Memory? To have one's Name quite buried in Oblivion, and be as if it had never been, has indeed neither Good nor Harm in it: But for a Man to be recorded as a Trifler, to be distinguished for egregious Insignificance, is at least a Proof that he had no Merit to recommend him,
 and

and a shrewd Sign that he was memorable for his **SERM.**
Vices. **XII.**

It would be well therefore, if all those who are so fond of this posthumous Acquaintance with Mankind would consider in what light Posterity will regard them; whether they think it will redound to their Honour, that they died on such a Day, that they measur'd so many Years upon Earth, and did nothing worth recording upon their Monuments. In particular, they should bethink themselves, whether they are Masters of any amiable, or any useful Quality; and whether, if their Actions were drawn out to View, they would appear in a better Light than *Methuselah's*. If not, their Names are not worth preserving, and Silence is the best Compliment that can be paid them.

Thus much for these Blanks and Cyphers in Society, which enjoy a kind of vegetable Life, without ever approving themselves to be rational Beings, or acting up to the Dignity of their Nature. There are others, of a more active and lively turn, who are as far from entertaining any manly Sentiment, or doing any thing more agreeable to their Reason; I mean those who are led away by their sensitive Appetites, and have a great Alacrity in all brutish Pleasures. *Methuselah*, for ought we know, might be one of this latter Stamp, notwithstanding there is so little said of him in my Text. For of all the Sons of *Adam*, that make up the Genealogy of *Noah*, *Enoch* is the only Person, that is said to have walked with God; from whence there is too much Reason to conclude, that the rest were of a different Character: It being scarce imaginable, that the Historian, who has taken so much Care to do Honour to one of them, should have omitted to do Justice to

SERM. the rest. It is therefore no improbable Supposition,
 XII. when we consider the Degeneracy of the Age he
 lived in, and the universal Corruption of Manners,
 which at that time prevail'd, that our Patriarch
 might have caught the Infection. Who knows but
 he was a Pretender to Wit and Humour, a Ridic-
 ule of the Preachers of Righteousness, and far gone
 in those fashionable Vices which caused the univer-
 sal Deluge? And what a mortifying Reflexion must
 it be to a polite and well-bred Sinner, to consider,
 that even in that aukward Age, before the modern
 Arts of Gallantry were in Being, Iniquity should be
 carried to so great a height, that it was very near
 extirpating the Species! Nothing can give us so
 mean an Idea of the Pretensions of our Men of
 Pleasure, as to compare them with an Antediluvian
 Reprobate. What a grotesque and uncouth Figure
 would *Methuselah* be apt to make, if he were drawn
 by a modern Painter; and yet, for ought any one
 knows, *Methuselah* might be as accomplish'd a Rake,
 as polite a Libertine as himself.

On the contrary, could we raise up the Patriarch,
 to survey the Pleasures of his modern Followers,
 what a despicable Set of Wretches would he think
 them! Whatever we may fancy of our Refinements
 upon Wickedness, it will appear that we can no more
 out-act the Vices, than we can rival the Virtues of
 our Predecessors. Some Advantages they certainly
 had above any of their puny Successors. They had
 a long Scene of Life before them, to perpetuate and
 lengthen out their Pleasures. They could spin out
 an Intrigue for threescore Years together, and be-
 stow as much Time upon the Gratification of one
 Desire, as we can upon the whole Business of our
 Lives. Besides this, as their Bodies were more du-
 rable

rable than ours, so were they likewise proportion-SERM.
ably robust. For without supposing the Strength of XII.
Nature to decay, her Offspring to become more
weak and feeble in the several Periods and Suc-
cessions of Time, we may presume that soon after
the Flood, at least, the Strength of Men was much
impaired, inasmuch as it requires less natural Vigour
to support a Man to the Age of Eighty or Ninety,
than eight or nine hundred Years. How must
it move the Scorn then of one of these ancient
Libertines, to see a Creature so full of Weakness
and Infirmary, pretending to the primitive Vigour
and Activity, and aping his strong Progenitors!
I chuse to represent these despicable Vermin as the
Objects of Derision only, because it is the Method,
which they constantly make use of, to discounte-
nance every thing that is of good Report: Besides
that it is in a manner the only Sort of Argument,
that we can suppose them capable of understanding.
Not but if the abandon'd Wretches could be per-
suaded to think seriously of their Condition, if they
would look backward upon what they have been
doing, and forward upon what they have to do; if
they would reflect upon the transitory Nature of their
Enjoyments, and the Certainty of either a weak Old-
Age, or an immature and hasty Death, they could
not, if they had the least Degree of Sensibility, with-
stand the Terrors of such a powerful Conviction.
For I would ask one of this Stamp and Character,
whether he thinks there was not once a Time, when
Methuselah was as young as he; whether he expects
to out-live that Patriarch; or if he does, whether he
shall never die. If it be true, that he must die at
last, no matter how long his Life is; no matter
what Youth and Beauty, what Strength and Vigour

SERM. he enjoys. But where is the voluptuous Libertine;

XII.  that lives out even half his Days? How often is he cut off in a Midnight Revel, or in the prosecuting of a criminal Amour! The Pains and Infirmities of Age are his Portion even in the Bloom of Youth. His Vigour is worn out at once; and the rest of his Days are but Labour and Sorrow, under the Fears of quitting even this wretched Being, and entering upon another more dreadful and discouraging; disabled for the Pleasures of this Life, he has no Relish for the Happiness of a better; and the most that can be said of him, is, that he lives under a perpetual Uncertainty, whether he should wish to live or die.

This puts me in mind of another sort of People who fall naturally under my Observation, while I am speaking of the Miseries of Life: I mean those, who are not contented with the short Span that is allotted them, but are ever wishing to extend their days beyond the common measure of Existence. This Passion is apt to grow upon us in the decline of Life, at a Time, when one would think the very Infirmities of our Nature should incline us to take Refuge in the Grave. What an abject State of Mind is it, thus to linger upon the Brink of a Precipice, when we are sure we must take the Leap at last! Especially since Age itself is so great an Evil, that nothing but the Consideration of a well-spent Life can mitigate or assuage the Pain of it. It is a fine Reflexion, that we meet with in a Fragment of a Greek Poet, 'That he is the happiest Man, who after having survey'd the Wonders of Nature, retires soonest to the Place from whence he came.' Life has no further Entertainments even for the Wise and Good, much less for those who spend it in a
Circle

Circle of Vice and Folly, Wantonness and Impertinence. There is not in Nature a more melancholy Consideration, than a superannuated Libertine. His Youth is despicable, but his Old-Age is below Contempt. How shocking is it to see him in the Impotence of Desire, drudging on in the Service of his Lusts, and betraying by the last Efforts of Wickedness he can make, that he would still be more wicked if he could ! At the same time he sees that he is the Jest of Fools, and that he is scarce pitied by the Wise and Good : So that all he wishes, when he wishes for Old-Age, is, to wear out the last Dregs and Refuse of Life in the most afflicting Circumstances of Shame and Misery : To be the Scorn and Derision of all that are round about him, and not so much as the Favourite of himself : Under the most disheartning of all Terrors, Contempt, not to have the Testimony of his own Conscience, nor even of his own Vanity to support him ; to be conscious that no one values or esteems him, and at the same time to be conscious he deserves it : To have out-liv'd the Capacity of enjoying Life, or even seeming to enjoy it handsomly ; and to be convinced by every thing he sees or hears, that it is Time for him to quit the Stage, and make room for those, who are more fit for Pleasure, and who can become it with a better Grace.

This indeed is the Case of the Wicked only, and of those who are full of youthful Follies. But Old-Age is far from being an Object of Desire, even in its best and most venerable Circumstances. The Ancients have given us a very just Idea of it in the well known Fable of *Tithonus*, and all that has been ever said to represent it in better Colours, has been rather what one would wish to find it, than what

SERM. it ever was found to be. The *Roman* Orator, in the XII. decline of Life, wrote an elaborate Treatise to recommend it. But all that either his Wisdom could suggest, or his Eloquence display upon the Subject, amounts to no more than Comfort. I mean, while he represents us as we really are, and confines himself within the Powers of Nature. For his *Cato* is a Romantick Character, and like that of his perfect Orator, made up of so many Beauties and Excellencies, as never met in any single Man. At the same time we must do him the Justice to acknowledge, that if Old-Age could be made a Blessing to any Man, it must be to such a Man as *Cato*, whose early Virtues even in the Dawn of Youth, gave the most reasonable Expectations, that his Old-Age would be crown'd with Honour. Not that this or any thing else is a sufficient Security against the Assaults and Injuries of Time. How often do we see the Ruins of an excellent Understanding, so disfigured and defaced with Age, and reduced to such a wretched State of Childishness and Dotage, as is a Reproach to human Reason! Who knows, how soon he himself may sink down to such miserable and disgraceful Circumstances! who would accept of the longest Life upon such base and ignominious Terms! Sure none can be so fond of this present World, but those who fear to venture upon another! And those would repine at their Share of Life, if it were extended to twice its Length. Nothing less than Eternity would content them. For whatever was at last to have an End, would, whenever that End approach'd, awaken in their Minds a Sense of their Guilt, and produce the same Fears and Terrors.

The Happiness therefore of human Life consists not in the Number of Years, but the Virtues that

are

are practis'd in it. It is but a Passage to a better State, and he that has his Eye fix'd upon his Journey's End, will never be offended at the Shortness of it. *Methuselah* lived nine hundred and sixty nine Years, and *Enoch* but three hundred and sixty five. One of them secured a blessed Immortality: Concerning the other, we know only that he died. And I hope I need not put the Question to any one, whether he had rather be *Methuselah* or *Enoch*. SERM.
XII.

Thus much for human Life in general; I come now to consider the Titles and Marks of Honour, that distinguish us from each other in it; which, however they may divide the World at present, will in a little time be quite silenced and extinguish'd. What do we know of the Patriarch in my Text, or of those that went before or after him? There is but one Instance in the Catalogue, of a Man eminent for his Virtue, or famed for any thing, but multiplying his Species. Which of them was most noted for his Wisdom, which of them for his Strength, or Beauty, or whatever else could at that time be made matter of Distinction, concerning this we have no History nor Tradition; and what a poor Idea must we form from hence of all our little Strifes and Competitions! Are any of these Worthies either the better or the worse for the high or low Stations they possess'd? Their Fortunes are now determined, and they are reduced to the same common Level. *Their love also, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.* Eccl. ix. 6. Such will be the State of all the Great ones, whose Names fill the World with wonder. They shall lie down alike in the Dust, and the Worms shall cover them. And is it worth while, think you, for an ambitious Spirit to rend the World into Sects and Parties for the sake of such a

SERM. short-liv'd Glory? Since Life is so soon to have an
 XII. End, 'tis no matter what Part we act in it. At present it is of very little Consequence to our Repose, and in a while it will be quite forgotten.

And this leads me to consider, in the last Place, the nature of Fame in general; especially that which springs up from the Grave, and has its Rise from the solemn Obsequies of the Dead. I doubt not but the venerable Patriarch, whose Name I have so often mentioned, is either ignorant that I am now descanting upon his History, or indifferent whether I praise or blame him; *and is deaf to our censures and applauses*, for to his own Master must he *stand or fall*. And from hence we may learn to despise that reverfionary Fame, which depends on the good opinion of Posterity. *Tully*, in the Dream of *Scipio*, has carried this Thought to as great a Height, as mere human Reason could pursue it. And yet you may observe how fondly he presages to himself the Applause of After-Ages; with how much Delight he dwells upon the Idea, and with what Ardency of Expectation he thirsted after it. Had this great Man been acquainted with our Religion, and believ'd as much as we do of the state of departed Spirits, how would he have despis'd all sublunary Glory, depending upon the Breath of Men! Religion opens a new Scene of Ambition, by recommending us to Beings of a superior Nature: Those Angels, who are said to rejoice at our Repentance, cannot be suppos'd to be inattentive to our Actions. And would it not be a more generous Ambition to endeavour after their Applause, than that of Creatures as full of Frailties as ourselves? Especially since the Time will come, when, if it is not our own Fault, we shall be remov'd from the groveling Pursuits of this transitory Life,

to the Society of those blessed Spirits. It is there-
 fore a very probable Argument, that our Concern
 for a Reputation in this present World shall cease
 with our Being in it, because we shall converse with
 intellectual Spirits of a more elevated and exalted
 Nature. It will be natural for us in this change of
 our Condition, to aspire after their Praise and Ap-
 probation; and in the hope of this, how little shall
 we be affected with any Glory we shall receive on
 Earth! The Reason why we are apt to be unmov'd
 at these Thoughts in our Life-time, is because they
 are too refined and abstracted. But the Time will
 come, when the Partition between the two Worlds
 will be broken down, the whole Tribe of intellectual
 Beings be laid open to our View, and we shall
 know, even as also we are known. Then will our
 Ambition take a nobler turn; we shall aim at the
 Esteem of celestial Beings; and the frail Monuments
 we have been erecting upon Earth, shall from thence-
 forth be for ever buried in Oblivion.

Thus have I laid before you some short Reflections
 upon the Vanity of human Life. I have taken oc-
 casion from what is told us of *Methuselah*, to observe,
 that to do nothing in Life is ridiculous; that to fol-
 low nothing but Pleasure is vain; that long Life is
 not worth enjoying; Titles and Distinctions not
 worth the seeking; and that a Fame after Death is
 lost upon us. I shall conclude therefore with these
 short Directions. If we desire our Lives may not
 be useless to the Publick, let us fill them up with
 Acts of Charity and Beneficence: If we would
 avoid being bewitch'd with Pleasure, let us begin to
 despise it young: If we would provide against the
 Miseries of Age, let us arm ourselves with an early
 Piety: If we are fond of Rank and Precedence, let

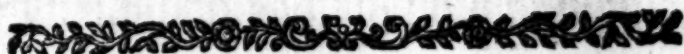
SERM. us consider that Death will level us : And if we are

XII. desirous of Fame hereafter, let us reflect that we
 shall be incapable of enjoying it. In general let us
 all remember, that we are intended for another Life,
 and let us fix all our hopes of Happiness, of Fame,
 and of Pleasure there. While we look not at the
 things which are seen ; but at the things, which are
 not seen : For the things which are seen, are tem-
 poral ; but the things which are nor seen, are eternal.

Now to God the Father, &c.

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S E R M O N S

UPON SEVERAL

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS,

VOLUME *the* SECOND.



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SYNOPSIS

UPON SEVERAL

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The Folly of Hypocrisy in this World.

A
S E R M O N

On JOB viii. 13.

The Hypocrite's Hope shall perish.

SINCERITY cannot be more effectually recommended, than by considering the difficulty of disguising our Inclinations, and laying a perpetual constraint upon our Words and Actions. This is an Argument, which will set the Folly of Hypocrisy in the clearest Light, and cannot fail to give the Preference to Religion, even upon the Principles of worldly Wisdom. Men think themselves obliged in common Prudence, as they would secure their Interest in the World, to wear the Garb of Holiness at least; and if they were further persuaded, that it is a Work of less difficulty to subdue their corrupt Affections, than to conceal them, this, one would think, must thoroughly convince them, how fruitless it is to pursue the *Shadow of Virtue*, when the *Substance* may be had at a much cheaper rate.

SERM. XIII.

SERM. In order to give this Consideration its proper Force,

XIII. you may observe, that notwithstanding our Infirmities
 W may be deeply rooted in our Hearts, and cleave so
 fast, as not to be removed without violent Pangs and
 Struggles; yet the painful operation is soon over,
 and then all is Peace. Our inordinate Affections
 grow daily more feeble and languid; every Stain
 and Blemish wears out by degrees; every good Pur-
 pose exerts itself in Action, and every good Action
 improves into Habit; till at last Virtue becomes easy
 and familiar, and soon appears lovely to the Soul.
 Hypocrisy, on the other hand, engages a Man in
 endless Perplexity, fills him with perpetual Doubts
 and Suspicions, and renders his whole Life restless
 and uncomfortable. As his Designs and Pretences
 are ever at variance, one Artifice becomes necessary
 for the support of another: Thus every Step he
 takes leads him into new Mazes and Intricacies, till
 he loses himself at last in a Labyrinth of his own
 contriving.

This will appear by considering more distinctly,
 that Dissimulation, as it is made up of Affectation
 and Falshood, is apt to break in upon its own Mea-
 sures, and frustrate its own Schemes and Intentions.

Affectation never fails to overact its part. It is
 continually pressing to be observed, and setting itself
 forth in all the Graces it can exert. Like an igno-
 rant Painter, it delights in superfluous Decorations,
 and loses the Resemblance amidst an infinite profu-
 sion of glaring and ill-chosen Colours: So that Hy-
 pocrisy, notwithstanding its disguises, discovers itself
 to the most ordinary Beholder, by affecting to dis-
 play too many Beauties, and by abounding with su-
 pernumerary Ornaments.

Falshood,

Fallhood, which is the other Ingredient, as it is SERM. XIII.
on all sides beset with Dangers, and liable to be de-
tected by numberless Events, which it can never
sufficiently attend to, must needs be extremely jealous,
always dissatisfied with itself, and full of distracting
Doubts and fearful Apprehensions. This, besides
that it is a very uncomfortable frame of Mind, is
moreover the most likely means in the world to dis-
cover what there is so much care taken to conceal.
Truth is frank, open and unreserved, distinguish-
ing itself by a certain ingenuous Freedom, which is
the natural result of Innocence and Simplicity. As
it is always undesigning, it is unsuspecting too; and
tho' it never seeks the Applause of Men, it seldom fails
of obtaining it. These are the sure Marks and inse-
parable Characters of that amiable and engaging
Virtue: In consequence of which it is natural to con-
clude, that the Hypocrite will be betray'd by his own
Diffidence and Suspicion; because, tho' it is impossi-
ble to deceive the World without the utmost Care
and Circumspection, that very Care and Circumspec-
tion itself will unavoidably detect him.

To inforce this Argument, it may be further ob-
served, that the Hypocrite, as well as the just and
upright Man, will be sure to draw the attention of
the Multitude. The Singularity of their Behaviour
will expose them to the severest Examination; and
their Conduct will be canvass'd with very quick and
piercing, if not with envious and malignant Eyes.
But here lies the difference in the Event: The good
Man bears the test of the strictest Scrutiny; or, if
Envy and Defamation, Vice and Ignorance, conspire
to blast his Character, they can never deprive him
of that strong Consolation, which will fortify the
Mind against the sharpest Stings of Calumny, *even*

the

SERM. *the Testimony of a good Conscience.* I need not observe, **XIII.** on the other side, how easy it will be to see thro' the Disguises of the Hypocrite, under all the Disadvantages I have already mentioned; nor how deplorable his Condition will then be, when he is stripped of what was the Substance of all his Wishes, *viz.* the good Opinion and Esteem of Mankind.

For it must be observed yet further, to his utter Confusion, that his Character, once lost, is irretrievable. Every new attempt to regain his Credit, will but confirm the general Persuasion, and render him still more odious and detested.

This, one would think, might be sufficient to discourage any reasonable Man from engaging in such a Scene of Perplexity. But since it is impossible to account for the Chimæras of a Man, who fancies himself cunning, since he may flatter himself with a wonderful Conceit of his own superior Talents, and think himself such a Master of Delusion, as not to be alarm'd at the miscarriages of his less artful Brethren, let us reason with him upon that Supposition. Let us suppose, that by artificial Disguises and false Colours, by Shifts and Subterfuges, and all the little Wiles which the most pregnant Genius can suggest, or the basest stoop to, he may struggle thro' these paths of Error: His Mask shall neither drop off by Accident, nor be torn from him by the Attempts of his Enemies, but he shall enjoy all the Satisfaction he can receive from seeing his Plots thrive and flourish, and himself, by their Success, regarded as a wise and good Man. Thus much may be safely allowed him, to convince him the more effectually of his Error, and to shew him, that after all, he is likely to miscarry; even this way his *Hope shall perish.*

For,

For, if you will inquire into the Springs and Motives of such a Man's Actions, and consider to what End they are directed, it will appear, that the only Acquisition he can aim at, must be that of Fame, or Wealth, or Power. Pleasure can be no part of his Pursuit, because it is inconsistent with his seeming Sanctity, and that Garb of Holiness he would appear in. Fame, therefore, or Wealth, or Power, must needs be the Object of his Wishes. But how far he is likely to succeed, we shall observe by considering them in their Order.

In the first place therefore, let us consider him as a Candidate for Fame alone, as a Man passionately fond of Applause, and, as he is represented in the Gospel, *sounding a Trumpet before him* when he does his Alms, affecting to pray publicly in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets, *that he may be seen of men*; in short, practising all the Externals of Religion, with a View to his own Glory, and contenting himself with that slender Reward which depends upon the empty Voices of the wavering and unsettled Multitude.

It cannot be denied, but a fair and unblemished Character, when a Man is conscious to himself that he deserves it, is an inestimable Blessing; and when it is desired for the sake of God's Glory, a very laudable Pursuit. A shining Pattern of Christian Purity, *in the midst of a corrupt and perverse generation*, may be more instrumental to the Conversion of Sinners, than the most labour'd Eloquence. And thus far the Hypocrite indeed, while he continues so well masked as we suppose him, may have his share in doing Honour to his Maker. For, as long as the World is mistaken in him, and deceiv'd by his pretences of Religion, it is to all intents and purposes as effectual with

SERM.
XIII.

SERM. with regard to them, as if he had the Life and Spirit of it. But then, with regard to the Man himself, **XIII.** the Question is, What Benefit he receives from the Character? For tho' he happens to be the Instrument of *bringing many to righteousness*, and tho' there is a Blessing promis'd to those who do so; yet is he no way intitled to that Blessing, because the good Influence of his Example was no part of his Intention. In order to make the Character beneficial to him, it must have something in it intrinsically valuable; something which, without the consideration of a Reward, may give him Pleasure in the Possession.

Now the only real grounds of Pleasure that a Man can receive from a good Name, are what I intimated before; either the Consciousness of that Virtue by which it was procured, or the Consideration that it is conducive to God's Glory and the Good of Mankind. A Man who is not in a State of Salvation himself, will receive but little Comfort from reflecting, that he causes others to be so, or that he is undesignedly promoting the Honour of that God, whose Ordinances he abuses, whose Name he daily prostitutes to the most infamous and unworthy purposes. So that unless he can play the Hypocrite with himself, and flatter himself into a conceit of that Virtue which he has not, all the Respect which can be paid to him upon the score of his pretended Piety, is so far from giving Pleasure, that it is a Pain to him; for if he thinks at all about it, the first and most obvious Reflexion he can make upon it is, That he does not deserve it. Now every degree of undeserved Praise is, in effect, a Reproach, inasmuch as it awakens in our Minds a sense of our own Unworthiness, and looks like upbraiding us with the want of that Merit which is ascrib'd to us. Accordingly, when we suppose

pose the Man who offers it, to be acquainted with SERM.
our Infirmities, we are so far from being pleased XIII.
with the Flattery, that we are apt to resent it as an 
Indignity. If it be asked therefore, in the case be-
fore us, Who can give so much Uneasiness to the Hy-
pocrite, since we suppose his Vices to be concealed
from the World, and all his Pretences to pass for Re-
alities? I answer, His own Conscience. Conscience
is ever watchful to check the most presumptuous Sin-
ner, to curb his Pride, and abase his Vanity, and re-
duce him to an humble Sense of his own Foulness and
Deformity. As often as he reflects upon his ill-gotten
Honours, it will taint and imbitter them with the
Conviction of his Guilt; in a word, it will turn his
Glory into Shame, and the finest Panegyrics into
Censure and Reproach.

For these Reasons, I suppose, the Hypocrite, tho'
he were able to secure so precarious a thing as Fame,
would have but little Cause to be pleased with it.

Let us consider therefore, in the next place, whe-
ther he is likely to succeed any better in his pursuit
of Wealth and Power. These two may be fairly
placed together, under the Name of Worldly Inte-
rest. *First*, Because they are naturally productive of
each other: For Wealth will purchase Power, and
Power will command Wealth. *Secondly*, Because, in
the present Inquiry, it will appear from the same
Considerations, that the Hypocrite's Hope, with
respect to both, is equally weak and groundless.

And here I might safely trust the Question to the
result of every Man's Experience. How are the
Riches of the World dispos'd of? Are they propor-
tioned to the seeming Piety of their Possessors? Do
they accompany the most distinguish'd Zeal? Alas?
we find it otherwise. We see daily, that the good
things

SERM. things of this Life are independent upon human

XIII. Forecast. So true is the Wise Man's Observation,

~ that *the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, nor yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to Men of Understanding, nor Favour to Men of Skill; but Time and Chance happen to them all.* It is for this Reason, that all temporal Advantages are, in the ordinary form of Speaking, called the Goods or Gifts of Fortune, because they are observed, for the most part, to be derived from such secret Sources, such seemingly fortuitous Events, as, in Conformity to our own slender Conceptions, we usually style Casualties or Contingencies. Not that, in a strict and proper Sense, we can call any thing casual or contingent. Had we but a clearer Insight into the Ways of Providence, we should, doubtless, behold the most perfect Order, the most exact and regular concurrence of Second Causes to the Execution of God's secret Purposes, and admire the infinite Wisdom of the Contriver. And here we are come to the true Reason, why the Hypocrite's Hope shall perish, because amongst all his Stratagems, he leaves out the only sure and effectual Art of Thriving, the Procurement of God's Blessing upon his Endeavours. Without this, he may very artfully dissemble, and amuse himself with many airy Projects; but those Projects are the Fruits of Vanity, and they will end in *Fixation of Spirit*: For *Promotion*, as the Psalmist well observes, *cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor yet from the South.* We can no more govern or direct the Course of it, than we can command the Winds to fill our Sails, or teach them from which side of the Heavens they shall blow. For, as it follows, *God is the Judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.* He is the Judge of our Innocence and Integrity; he

is the Judge of our Capacities and Powers; and he SERM.
 is the Judge of our Designs and Purposes. He knows XIII.
 who best deserves the Blessings of this Life, if any 
 Man can be said to deserve them: He knows who can,
 and who will employ them to the Advancement of
 his Glory, and the great Ends of his gracious Provi-
 dence; and in proportion to the Difference of Mens
 Circumstances in these respects, there is no doubt
 but he observes a suitable Difference in his Dispen-
 sations to them, aiding and supporting some Men with
 singular Demonstrations of *Mercy and Loving-kindness*,
 but abandoning and forsaking others, who take not
 him for their Trust, to the fatal Consequences of
 their own Pride and Obstinacy, and to the bitter
 Fruits of their mistaken Policy.

Prayer is the only Method, which God has been
 pleased to appoint, for the Attainment of all tempo-
 ral as well as spiritual Mercies. We are taught to
 pray *for our daily Bread*, as well as for the *Forgiveness*
of our Sins; for the Comforts and Conveniencies of
 this Life, as well as for a glorious Inheritance in the
 next. And if we do pray for them with such a Spi-
 rit as we ought, there is no doubt but we shall
 effectually obtain them: Obtain them, I mean, in
 such a manner, and to such a degree, as he sees will
 be most useful for us. Since therefore the Hypocrite
 is so proud, *that he careth not for God, neither is God*
in all his Thoughts; since he relies upon his own Con-
 duct and Experience, saying with the insolent *Assyrian*
in the Prophet, By my own Hand will I do this thing,
and by my Wisdom, for I am prudent; since he neglects
 to look up for Succour to that unexhausted Source of
 Bounty, from which every good and perfect Gift
 cometh, we may conclude, that tho' he will not be
 actually opposed in his Designs; tho' he will not be
 denied

BERM. denied the free Exercise of his Faculties, and the
 XIII. Enjoyment of those common Blessings which are
 w dispensed unto all Men promiscuously; yet surely he
 will fall short of those greater and more positive In-
 stances of God's Favour, by which he is pleased to
 cooperate with the Endeavours of his faithful People,
 and which he has made Prayer the sole Method of
 obtaining.

If therefore you will take a view of him in this
 abandon'd and deserted State, thus destitute of the
 Divine Assistance, and given up to his own Govern-
 ment and Direction, it will appear, *First*, that he
 has no Likelihood of Success. *Secondly*, That if he
 fails, the Disappointment will receive a peculiar
 Aggravation, by the very Frame and Disposition of
 his Temper. And, *Thirdly*, That if he should gain
 his End, he is not sure but it may be a Burden or
 Incumbrance, nay, possibly may prove his Ruin.

This, you will find, must needs be his Case, when
 once he has let go his Confidence in God. *First*, I
 say, he has no Likelihood of Success; and a very
 small degree of Reflexion upon the Infirmary of hu-
 man Nature, will furnish us with abundant Proofs of
 it. For tho' God has been pleased, for the Mani-
 festation of his own Glory, and for the Excitement
 of our Gratitude and Obedience, to make us, in
 some respects, little lower than the Angels, to enno-
 ble us with many excellent Endowments, and to
 place us at the head of this Animal Creation; yet
 has he likewise, for the Trial of our Virtue, and in
 order to convince us of our absolute Dependence
 upon his Power, left us, in other respects, very
 frail, and feeble, and indigent, and almost helpless
 Beings. For what is the utmost Extent of human
 Wisdom, but reasoning upon Probabilities and Con-
 jectures?

jectures? He, that by the strength of a good natural SERMON
Judgment, or by the help of Experience and Obser- XIII.
vation, sees farthest into the Designs and Intrigues,
and Follies of other Men, and out of that Variety
of jarring Interests, makes choice of the most likely
Methods to secure his own, is usually regarded as
the shrewdest Man. But, alas! how weak and in-
secure must those Counsels prove, which are founded
upon such uncertain Principles? Where the Malice
and Resentment of one Man, the Treachery of ano-
ther, the Levity and Caprice of a third, besides a
Multitude of accidental Circumstances, which it is
impossible for the most discerning Eye to foresee, or
the most vigilant to attend to, may undermine or
disconcert his Project, and render all his Labour
fruitless.

This is expressed by a very lively Image, by
Bildad in the Book of *Job*, where, speaking of the
folly of the Hypocrite's expectation, *His Hope*, says
he, *shall be cut off, and his Trust shall be a Spider's*
Web; intimating, that he may have formed it with
great Art and Industry, and contrived it like the
Nets of that ensnaring Reptile, to glut himself with
the Spoils of others; but, after all, the slightest and
most trivial Accident, perhaps before it has had its
mischievous Effect, may break and disjoint the goodly
Fabrick, or utterly overturn and ruin it.

But, *Secondly*, If this should happen to be the
Case, as it is more than probable it will, you may
observe, that the Disappointment will receive a pe-
culiar Aggravation, from the very Frame and Dis-
position of his Temper. I will explain what I mean
by an Instance; and a remarkable Instance we have
in the Story of *Achitophel*, which I shall take the
liberty to relate at large. This Man was, it seems;

SERM. a very dextrous Hypocrite, one that had not the least regard to Religion or common Honesty, as appears from his treacherous desertion of his Royal Master, as well as from that execrable advice he gave to *Absalom*, relating to his Father's Concubines; yet being perfectly acquainted with *David's* Piety, who had declared upon his first Accession to the Royal Dignity, that he *would set no wicked thing before his Eyes; that a forward Heart should depart from him; and that he would not know a wicked Person;* being acquainted, I say, with this solemn Resolution of his Master *David*, he thought it necessary to disguise his Vices, and sacrifice them for some time to his Ambition; and accordingly did so artfully conform himself to the Inclinations of that pious Prince, as to gain the first Place in his Affections, and to seat himself at the Head of his Counsels. But finding the People's Affections bear violently towards the rebellious *Absalom*, and weary perhaps of that religious Restraint which the Court of *David* had confin'd him to, he gladly applies himself to the prevailing Faction, and makes his Court to the young Usurper. And now he had a fair Prospect of all that his Hopes could grasp at; a young and unexperienced Prince to govern; one that would require nothing at his Hands, but an Indulgence in all criminal Delights, which, as he was extremely fond of himself, he was not likely to find fault with in his Counsellor. So that he was at liberty, as soon as he pleas'd, to cast off the Vizard, which had hitherto been a sore Restraint to him, and to make his Greatness and his Vice consistent. But remark the Fruits of Treachery: In the very Dawn and Infancy of his Hopes, finding the Counsel of another preferr'd before his, thinking himself slighted and

and contemned by one whom he had hoped to go-SERM.
vern, stung with Rage and Shame and Disappoint- XIII.
ment, he arose, says the sacred Historian, *and gat*
him home to his house, to his city, and set his household
in order, and hanged himself. If it be ask'd now,
What was the Reason that so great and able a Politi-
cian, when possibly he might have crush'd his Rival,
or found out some better Method to secure his own
Quiet, should have recourse to such a desperate Ex-
pedient? The Answer is very obvious, it was his
Pride. Pride is an inseparable Ingredient in the
Composition of every Hypocrite, and a Quality
which renders him of all Men living the most inca-
pable of bearing a Disappointment. When a Man
comes to set such an unreasonable Value upon his
own Judgment and Understanding, as to think him-
self an Over-match for the rest of Mankind, to fancy
he can beguile them at pleasure, and pry into their
closest Counsels without ever being detected himself,
it is no Wonder if he grows immoderately vain,
and, in the Strength of that Vanity, first flatters
himself with the Promise of some wonderful Acqui-
sitions, and then begins to fancy he has a Right to
them. For it is the Nature of all Pride, especially
that which is founded upon a Conceit of some super-
lative Excellency in the Understanding, to make out
false and imaginary Titles to every thing which a
Man's Heart can wish for. For what Greatness can
be so highly elevated, as to be out of the Reach of
such exalted Merit? What Difficulties to be en-
countered in the Way, which so much Prudence
may not easily surmount? Thus does the Man reason
himself into Wealth and Power, without suffering
himself to think he may fall short of them, till Ex-
perience convincing him of his Mistake, he raves,

SERM. and frets, and repines at Providence, venting his
 XIII. Anger upon Friends and Foes, Himself, or any
 ~~~~~ thing which can be thought to have been instrumental  
 to his Miscarriage, or which stands within the Reach  
 of his Displeasure.

Thus irksome and tormenting will a Disappointment prove, if he should fail of the End he proposed.

But, *Thirdly*, Because it is not impossible that he may succeed, you may observe, that the very Possession of the End he drives at, may perhaps be no better than a Burden or Incumbrance, nay, possibly may prove his Ruin. For if you will but once more reflect upon the Infirmary of our Nature, it will appear that we are as often mistaken in the End we propose, as in the Means we make use of to obtain it,

The Life of Man is, you know, frequently called a State of Pilgrimage, a Passage to a better Place of Rest; and to keep up this Allusion, the several Prospects of imaginary Happiness which we fix in it, have been compar'd to those distant Landscips with which the faint and weary Traveller, dissatisfied with all Objects near him, is apt to entertain his Fancy, pleasing himself with the Thoughts of arriving at that delightful Scene, which appears with so much Beauty and Regularity to the distant Eye. The Similitude is never the less just and beautiful, for being grown so common as it is. But in the case before us, it may be carried further. For you may observe, that those Places which form a Prospect so amiable and inviting, are usually the most rude and uncultivated parts of Nature, such as Rocks, and Hills, and Woods, the receptacles of Thieves and Murderers, and so not only the most chearless and uncomfortable,



*The Folly of Hypocrisy in this World.*

171

SERM.  
XIII.

comfortable, but likewise the most dangerous Stages we have to pass. And is not this exactly parallel to our Passage thro' this Vale of Misery? Have not the most splendid Advantages of this Life as many real Dangers, when you approach them, as they have Beauties and Allurements at a distance? To instance in Wealth and Power, the two things we are more immediately considering; how is a Man sure when he has gained them, that the former will not expose him to the Artifices of crafty Deceivers, or the more dangerous Assaults of outrageous Spoilers? that the latter will not sacrifice him to the Envy of meaner, or to the Jealousy of greater Men? to the implacable Malice of persecuted Enemies, or the sharp Resentment of unrewarded Friends? May not Avarice and Ambition, those insatiable and tormenting Passions, which first put him upon the Pursuit of Greatness, still harass and disquiet him in the Possession, so that he may lose all the Satisfaction of what he has already gain'd, in the restless Expectation of some thing future? Or lastly, may he not, as is too common, grow giddy with the Height he is raised to, and be tempted by his Power to such Acts of Insolence and Oppression, as may first expose him to the Hatred of Mankind, and end at last in his utter Ruin? Whoever considers these, and such-like Hazards, to which the good Things of this Life may expose us, will have Reason to think, that as God may sometimes, in Mercy, oppose us in our Attempts to gain them, so may he also, in his Anger, suffer Men to be curst with Prosperity, and to be undone by the Success of their Endeavours.

The Truth is, without a Delight in God, there can be no real and substantial Happiness. Life itself will be no better than a Burden, and its most honour-

SERM. able Appendages so many Additions to our Anxiety.

XIII. This is what *Job* insisted on, when, after having heard the Reasons of his Friends to prove the Weakness of the Hypocrite's Expectations, he added this pertinent Interrogatory, as a better and more decisive Argument, than any which had been urged by them: *Will he, says he, delight in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?* Intimating, that without such a Delight in the Almighty, such an Inclination to call always upon God, the greatest Affluence of earthly Blessings will never procure a Man that inward Complacency, that habitual and lasting Peace of Mind, which arises from the Consideration of having God for our Friend; the great Governor of the Universe for our Protector. This is of the Essence of all human Happiness, insomuch that a Man may as well expect the Joys of Heaven hereafter, as true Quiet and Contentment here, upon any other Terms, than the sincere Practice of Religion, and securing to himself an Interest in his God.

Thus have I pursued the Hypocrite thro' those dark and uncertain Mazes which he treads in pursuit of Happiness, and found him always either lost and bewildered in his Searches, or dissatisfied with what he had obtained; either failing of his End, by chusing wrong Methods, or mistaken in the very End itself: So that, upon the whole, we may safely pronounce that, with respect to the Advantages of this present World, the Hypocrite's Hope shall perish.

I chose rather to insist upon this, because it is a Doctrine which the generality of Mankind seem to be but little acquainted with. One great Obstruction to the Practice of Religion is, a false and groundless

less Opinion, with which the Multitude are apt to de-  
ceive themselves, that it is inconsistent with their  
worldly Interest; that Purity and Simplicity of Heart  
are indeed necessary Qualifications for the obtaining  
of Happiness in the next World; but that Treachery  
and Dissimulation, indirect and deceitful Practices,  
have a far better and more effectual Tendency to  
promote their Happiness in this. The Use there-  
fore, that I would make of all which has been said  
upon this Subject, is, to convince Men of this dan-  
gerous Mistake, that being beaten out of their strong  
Hold of Hypocrisy, they may be disposed to hearken  
with more Readiness and Attention to Arguments of  
a more spiritual Nature; and that being convinced  
of the Vanity of all earthly Pursuits, they may be  
induced to pursue the one Thing needful, *even the  
eternal salvation of their souls.* For, after all, the  
great and important Question is that which is put by  
*Job, What is the Hypocrite's hope, tho' he hath gain'd,  
when God taketh away his soul?* or, as a Christian  
would chuse rather to express it, *when he appears be-  
fore the Judgment-seat of Christ?* This, I say, is a  
Question of the utmost Importance, and which well  
deserves to be enlarg'd upon. But as it would carry  
me too great a Length at present, I shall chuse it as  
a Subject for another Discourse.

*New to God the Father, &c.*





*The miserable Portion of Hypocrites  
in the next World.*

A

S E R M O N

On J O B xxvii. 8.

*What is the hope of the Hypocrite, tho' he  
hath gained, when God taketh away his  
Soul?*

SERM.  
XIV.

 OR the better Understanding of these Words, it will be proper to consider, in the first Place, the Circumstances and Condition of the Person who is said to speak them, together with the main Scope and Design of his Discourse. *Job* had, as appears from the foregoing Chapters, been suspected by his Friends of Hypocrisy; and good Reason they thought they had to suspect him, because, tho' they could lay no one Crime to his Charge (neither indeed did they attempt to do it) yet they saw him visited with such a wonderful and amazing Succession of Calamities, as they thought he could never have been afflicted with, but as a Punishment for some secret Sin, some darling Passion, which he had indulg'd



indulg'd in private, to the Ruin of his Fortune, and SERM.  
to the Forfeiture of God's Favour and Protection. XIV.

To wipe off this infamous Asperſion, and to clear up his own Integrity, he firſt blames them for preſuming too poſitively to pronounce their Opinion upon the Reaſons of God's Mercies or Severities to the Sons of Men. *Shall any (ſays he) teach God knowledge, ſeeing he judgeth them that are high? One dieth in his full Strength, being wholly at Eaſe and Quiet: His Breasts are full of Milk, and his Bones are moiſtened with Marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his Soul, and never taſteth of Comfort. They ſhall lie down alike in the duſt, and the Worms ſhall cover them:* Intimating, that tho' there is no doubt, but all God's Judgments are ſtrictly juſt and equitable, yet to us they are obſcure and unaccountable, involv'd in ſo much Darkneſs and Perplexity, that it is hard to make any Inference from them to the Advantage or Diſadvantage of other Men. But then, leſt they ſhould think that by this Opinion of his, he made no difference between the Righteous and the Wicked, or that he looked upon the Condition of the one to be as happy as the other, he takes care to aſſure them of the contrary, telling them, that whatever Bleſſings the Wicked might ſometimes enjoy, or however the Righteous might be diſtreſſed, yet this ſhould never be an Argument with him to prove, that Virtue or Vice were indifferent Matters, or that the falſe Pretence and Appearance of Religion was as good as the true Subſtance and Spirit of it. *As God liveth, ſays he, who hath taken away my Judgment, and the Almighty, who hath vexed my Soul; all the while the Breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my noſtrils, my Mouth ſhall not ſpeak Wickedneſs, nor my Tongue utter Deceit. God*

SERM. forbid that I should justify you; till I die, I will not remove mine Integrity from me. My Righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: My Heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. Let mine Enemy be as the Wicked, and he that riseth up against me, as the Ungodly. For what is the hope of the Hypocrite, tho' he hath gained, when God taketh away his Soul? As if he had said, I am as sensible, as you can be, of the great benefits which accompany Sincerity; and therefore I will never part with it, for all the seeming profits which the Hypocrite can obtain. For whatever becomes of your Argument, whether he always suffers in this World or no, yet sure I am, there is another World, wherein he will be called to a severe Account, wherein all the seeming Irregularities in God's Providence will be set right, and the Wicked will meet with a due Recompence for their Sins.

It must be owned, that this Sense of the Words which I have given you, is not without its Objections. For it may be said, *First*, That upon examining this Passage distinctly, it does not appear Job had any Regard in his Argument to a State of Retribution in the next World, because the following part of his Discourse does manifestly relate to the Affairs of this World only. *Secondly*, That if you consider what dark and imperfect Notices of a future State the World must be supposed to have had at the Time when this Book was written, how it was couched under Types and Shadows, and never fully and clearly apprehended, till our blessed Lord himself brought Life and Immortality to light thro' the Gospel, it may reasonably be supposed, that he had no View to those future Punishments, which were at that time so little understood, and that he did not consider Death as a Passage to another Life, but as the

the last Period and Consummation of this. In answer SERM.  
to the first of these Objections, it will be sufficient to XIV.  
observe, that in the Poetical Parts of Holy Scripture,   
where the Sentiments are warm and elevated, there  
is not always that exact Order and Contrivance, that  
Caution in the Transition from one Subject to ano-  
ther, which is to be met with in argumentative Dis-  
courses. Whoever will carefully consider the Book  
which I am speaking of, will find this to be the Case  
in almost every Chapter; so that it can be no Fault  
in the Passage before us, to have recourse to the  
same Rule for explaining it, which must needs be so  
frequently applied to for the understanding the other  
parts of the Book; especially since by this means  
the Argument appears with much greater Strength  
and Consistency, than by understanding it in any  
other manner. For since it is manifestly *Job's* inten-  
tion to prove, that he looks upon the Condition of  
the Hypocrite to be less desirable than that of the  
righteous Man, in some respect or other; and since  
he declares in other places, that with respect to the  
Advantages of this World, there is little or no Dif-  
ference between them; we may reasonably conclude,  
that when he comes to set the Folly of Hypocrisy  
upon a better foot, he must mean something more  
than that separation of Soul and Body, that break-  
ing of the vital Union, which is common both to  
the Just and Unjust, and consequently that he has  
respect to those subsequent Punishments of wicked  
men, to which Death is but an Entrance or Intro-  
duction; unless it can be proved that he was an  
utter Stranger to this Doctrine, and had no Know-  
ledge of such Recompences hereafter. And this  
brings me to the second Objection, drawn from the  
Darkness and Uncertainty, under which the World

SERM. did at that time labour, with respect to that great  
XIV. and important Article, the Doctrine of a future

W Judgment. In answer to this it must be observed, that a Man may give a firm and sincere Assent to the Truth of Doctrines, which he has no clear and explicit Notion of. For instance, there are many pious and well-meaning Christians, who believe the Doctrine of the blessed Trinity, without ever being able to explain, as others will pretend to do, what is the strict and precise meaning of the Word *Person*, or how *Three* of them can be united together in *One* simple and undivided Substance. So that the Darkness and Obscurity wherewith the thing was understood, is no Proof that it was not fully credited: And tho' the Mystery of our Redemption, the manner of our Resurrection, the Nature of our Trial at the Judgment-seat, together with the other Circumstances of that awful Solemnity, were not revealed in the prophetick Writings, with so much Accuracy and Exactness as they were afterwards by Christ and his Apostles, yet that there was to be a Resurrection in general, and a State of Rewards and Punishments subsequent thereupon, was expected with some Confidence and Assurance; insomuch that the *Sadducees* who disputed the Truth of it, were looked upon by their believing Brethren, as a wilful and perverse sort of People, who were unreasonably fond of their own Fancies and Inventions, and obstinately shut their Eyes against Conviction. Now that this was no novel and upstart Notion, introduced among the later *Pharisees*, but a primitive and authentick Doctrine, as early as Religion itself, is evident from many positive Predictions to this purpose, which are to be found in their most ancient Writings, which however grossly perverted and misinterpreted by the Ignorance



Ignorance of the succeeding *Jews*, yet were after-SERM. wards so wonderfully cleared up and illustrated by XIV. their correspondence with the Gospel-Promises, that their meaning can be no longer doubted of. I need not cite a Multitude of Instances, because we have one as good as a Multitude from the Mouth of *Job* himself. *I know*, says he, *that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the Earth: And though after my skin, Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.* I would fain hear the most hearty Christian profess his Faith in the Redemption of Mankind, and the Resurrection from the Grave, in words more determinate and express. *I know that my Redeemer liveth: A Declaration given with so much Confidence and Assurance, such an apparent Triumph upon his prospect of future Happiness, that those who would suppose the ancient Fathers to have wanted these hopes of Immortality, must have recourse to a Miracle to explain it. They must suppose it could proceed from no other Cause, but some great and supernatural Support, with which the Divine Goodness was pleased to refresh him; some Anticipation or Foretaste of his future Happiness, which was given him as a Counterpoise to his present Agonies, and to the Malice of his implacable Tormenter. However, be this as it will, it is evident from this Passage, beyond all Contradiction, that *Job* was no Stranger to the Doctrine of a future Judgment, which was all that I intended to prove by it. And can it be supposed after all, that he, who has expressed himself upon this Subject with so much Strength and Perspicuity, who has also declared in another Place, that the Wicked is reserved to the day*

SERM. of Destruction; that they shall be brought forth to the  
 XIV. day of Wrath; can it be supposed, I say, that this

 Man at such a Juncture, when he was setting forth the Folly of the Hypocrite in its blackest and most aggravating Colours, should have mentioned nothing but his temporal Death, when he knew it was so much more to the purpose to have insisted upon his eternal Misery? For as to the Words themselves, they are more capable of bearing this Sense, than the other: And I cannot but observe, that our blessed Lord himself, who first published these Tidings to the World in their full Latitude and Extent, where he is professedly treating of this Subject, makes use of Expressions to the very same effect. *What is a Man profited, says he, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* Words, that have so exact a Similitude and Affinity to these of *Job*, that one would think they had been borrowed from them, and that Christ, who was perfect Wisdom, seeing the Strength and Cogency of the Argument in my Text, had not only been pleased to make use of it himself, but had also confined himself, as far as the Nature of his Subject would permit, to the same Phrase and Form of Speaking.

Upon the whole, I shall take it for granted, that *Job's* Meaning at large is this: I am as sensible, my Friends, as you can be, of the Truth of what one of you has advanced, that *the Hypocrite's hope shall perish*; but whether it will always perish in this World, is more than I will presume to affirm. However, there is another Consideration, which has a far greater Influence upon me, namely, That tho' he were never so successful here, tho' his Condition were never so flourishing, yet his Life is short and transient, and there is a great day of Accounts at hand,

hand, when not only the Works of his Hands, but **SERM.**  
also the very Thoughts of his Heart ; not only his **XIV.**  
foulest Actions, but even the Principles and Motives   
upon which he performs the best, shall be all together laid naked and open before the Eyes of an impartial Judge, even that great and awful God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold Iniquity, and will be sure to render unto every man according to his Works.* It is therefore a more material Point with me, a Point which I think it every Man's Duty to consider, what Plea he will be able to make before that wise and almighty Being, whose Sentence is to fix his Happiness or Misery to all Eternity.

II. This I take to be the Meaning of my Text, which having thus fully opened and explained to you, I proceed in the *second* place to examine it more distinctly, by enquiring what Hope the Hypocrite can reasonably have of escaping at that dreadful day.

For surely it must be a dreadful day indeed, when a terrified and affrighted Sinner, who has run out the short Span which was allowed him, and has now no Space to wipe out his past Transgressions, shall be summon'd to have his Cause examined before a provoked and offended God ; a God, to whom he has been obliged for his very Being, for a rational and immortal Soul, endued with many noble Faculties ; but, what is infinitely more precious than all the rest, capable of knowing and adoring his great Creator ; for a Redemption by his Son's Blood from the power of Sin and Satan ; and for many other great and glorious benefits without Number, and without Measure, for which he has made no other returns of Gratitude and Obedience, but what Shame or Fear, or that more base and ignoble Principle,

SERM. ciple, the hope of worldly Interest, has obliged  
 XIV. him to: In short, a God whose Statutes he has de-  
 ~~~~~  
 ridged in his Heart, at the same time that he has ap-
 proached him with his Lips, and whose holy Name
 he has most impudently made use of, as a Cover
 for his own dark and flagitious Purposes. To such
 a one, I say, the Majesty of the Lord appearing to
 take Vengeance of his Enemies, must needs be a
 very horrible and affrighting Spectacle. And that
 we may be able to form a better Judgment of the
 Reception he will meet with there, let us enquire a
 little more particularly into the Nature of his Guilt;
 for in proportion to the Degrees of this, there is
 no doubt but his Punishment will be aggravated or
 abated.

Whether the daring and licentious Reprobate,
 who derides every thing which is *honest and of good
 Report*, or the dark and crafty Dissembler, who
 cloaths his Treachery under the Garb of Holiness,
 be the more criminal in the Sight of God, is a Que-
 stion that may well be spared, they being both so
 odious and detestable, that neither of them needs
 any Comparison to aggravate and enhance his Guilt.
 The Blasphemy and Impiety of the former cannot
 be so much as heard of without Horror; but then
 it must be own'd, when you compare him with the
 other, that he acts the fairer and more ingenuous
 part. The Influence of his Example is certainly
 very dangerous to the Community, inasmuch as he
 discountenances every thing that is praise-worthy,
 and as far as his Credit and Authority reaches, in-
 verts the very Nature of Good and Evil, making
 the most sacred things contemptible, and the basest
 reputable. And yet when the Hypocrite comes once
 to be detected, it may be question'd which is the
 more

more dangerous of the two. For a Man that has SERM.
once pretended to great Sanctity and Devotion, to XIV.
be stript of those borrowed Ornaments, and to appear
in his own genuine Deformity, gives no small Sus-
picion to the Ignorant, that all others who profess
the same, are guilty of as much Artifice and De-
lusion; and as there are some who thro' Weakness
will believe this; so there are others, who out of a
malicious Principle will industriously foment such
Suspensions; so that the Miscarriage of one false Pre-
tender may be more mischievous to the Cause of
Virtue, than the constant and uniform Obedience
of its most sincere Professors can possibly prove use-
ful and beneficial. And indeed it has been observed
in Fact, that Libertinism and Hypocrisy do naturally
succeed each other; and that as, after an Age of
Lewdness and Debauchery, when Men have broke
loose from the Restraints of Conscience, so as to
lose the very Form of Godliness, their Successors
being ashamed of such flagrant Abuses, have had
Recourse to a specious Formality, to a plausible
Pretence of uncommon Sanctity; so on the other
hand, when this has once had its Run, and the
World began to see thro' the Cheat, it has usually
degenerated into the contrary Extreme, and rather
than make use of such infamous Disguises, relapsed
into downright Scepticism.

Thus heinous and provoking does this Vice ap-
pear, considered in its Effects and Consequences.
But to the end that you may behold it in its proper
Colours, let us consider it as it appears in itself.
And here you may observe in the first Place, that
it cannot but be highly displeasing to Almighty
God, upon Account of the corrupt Principle that it
springs from, *They love,* says our blessed Saviour,
speaking

SERM. speaking of the Hypocrites in his own times, *they love to pray standing in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets, that they may be seen of Men: They disfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to fast. And in another Place, Therefore when thou dost shine Alms, do not sound a Trumpet before thee, as the Hypocrites do, in the Synagogues and Corners of the Streets, that they may have Glory of Men: Verily, I say unto thee, they have their Reward.* The Reward, you see, which the Hypocrite aims at, according to our blessed Lord's Account of it, is Glory; and the Motive which inclines him to seek that Reward, can be nothing else but Pride; a Quality so opposite to the very End of our Existence, and the Foundation of all Religion, that before we can hope for God's Favour, it must be utterly stifled and extinguished. For how is it possible to *sanctify the Lord God in our Hearts*, when we have set up ourselves as so many Idols there; or to have any regard to his Glory, when we are immoderately fond of our own? It would be endless to cite Passages from Scripture, wherein the Heinousness of this Vice is mentioned. But I cannot but observe, that where *Solomon*, from the whole Compass of Iniquity, picks out seven capital Transgressions, which are in a peculiar manner offensive to the Almighty, the two first are Pride and Treachery, both of them sure Marks of the Hypocrite; the latter denoting his deceitful Practice, as the former points out the vicious Motive from which that Practice springs. *These six things doth the Lord hate, saith he, nay, seven are an Abomination to him: A proud Look, and a lying Tongue, and so on.* The same Observation is in another Place enforced, in a more eminent and peculiar manner, from the Dignity and Authority of the Speaker. *Pride and*

Arrogance,

Arrogance, and the evil Way, and the froward Tongue SERM.
do I hate. The Person who is introduced as speak- XIV.
 ing these Words, is Wisdom; by which is generally understood, either, *first*, that Attribute or Perfection of the Divine Nature which is so called, and is here figuratively represented as a Person: or, *secondly*, which is the better Sense of it, it is understood of the Son of God himself, the second Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, who is frequently styled the Word, or Wisdom, and *Luke xi. 49.* is expressly called *the Wisdom of God.* And well may we suppose this Caution against Pride to come from that blessed Person, who, when he *was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us*, and might have recommended himself to our Imitation as a Pattern of all good Works, yet chose to propose himself to the World as an Example of Meekness only, *Learn of me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly*; intimating, that as Humility is one of the most useful Lessons a Christian has to learn; so Pride, which is the Vice opposed to it, is one of the most dangerous Rocks he has to shun. And such it is elsewhere described to be. *For a Man's Pride shall bring him low*, says Solomon: And in another Place, *Pride goeth before Destruction, and a haughty Spirit before a Fall.* Of this we had a very memorable Instance in the Fall of our Mother Eve. *Ye shall be as Gods*, said the wicked Tempter, who well knew the Passions he was to work upon, and you may be sure made his Assault in the weakest and most defenceless part; *Ye shall be as Gods*, said that fly Deceiver, *knowing Good and Evil.* This he knew, was a most engaging Motive: *To be as God* was his own Ambition; he had aimed at it, and perished in the Attempt, so that he was informed by a fatal Experiment, not only how alluring a Temptation it was, but

SERM. but likewise how vile a Sin. And you may be sure
 XIV. it was Matter of no small Joy to that malicious and
 ~~~~~ accursed Spirit, no small Endearment of his Strata-  
 gem to him, that the very Motive which he had  
 contrived to beguile them, was no less displeasing  
 to the Almighty, than it was pleasing to them; and  
 consequently would be not only the Cause, but the  
 Aggravation of their Guilt and Misery.

Thus fell deluded Man! and had we not received  
 some fatal Taint, some lasting and inherent Weakness  
 from the decay'd Faculties of our first Parents, one  
 would think we should have grown wiser by their  
 Example. But alas! Man is still proud and frail; *to*  
*be as God* is his Ambition still; and because, like his  
 fallen Parents in Paradise, he sees that he is naked;  
 naked of every thing that is good and honourable,  
 and polluted besides with many gross Impurities, he  
 therefore has Recourse to such thin Disguises as the  
 Poverty of his Invention can suggest: Over these he  
 throws the Garb of Holiness; then sounds the Trum-  
 pet to proclaim his Worth, and calls the World to  
 fall down and worship him.

And much Worship he may receive of Man; But,  
 with what Eyes can we suppose the Almighty to look  
 down upon such an Image of Guilt and Vanity!  
 Surely, were we not acquainted with his Patience  
 and Long-Suffering, we should expect some dreadful  
 Judgment, some great and signal Vengeance to over-  
 take him, from the hand of that righteous Being,  
 who hath declared by the Mouth of *Job*, that *the*  
*Helpers of Pride shall stoop under him*; and by the  
 Mouth of his Servant *David*, that *he plentifully re-*  
*wardeth the proud Doer*. Especially, if we consider  
 in the next place, that all this Guilt is further aggra-  
 vated by being accompanied with Treachery or In-  
 sincerity,



incerity, which is the *second* Quality to be observed in the Hypocrite, and which is expressed by Solomon in the Passages above-cited, under the Title of *lying Lips, or a deceitful Tongue*. This is indeed his most essential Property, the Character by which he is most eminently distinguished, and which exposes him to so much Scorn in the World. For it is observable of this hateful Quality, from the Reception which it meets with among Men, that all the Malice and Art of Satan, whose Business it is to propagate and support it, has never been able to gain it any tolerable Credit and Repute. To be a Liar, is the Reproach of our Nature; and to be upbraided with it, the most provoking Affront; insomuch that those Monsters of Impiety who have gloried in other Vices, have always been extremely careful not to expose this Failing to the World. It is practised indeed, God knows, too much; but it is practised with Shame and Secrecy: Conscious of its own Foulness and Deformity, it shelters itself in Shades and Coverts, and loveth Darkness rather than Light, because it knows *that its Deeds are evil*.

If therefore Treachery be thus odious among Men, it cannot but be infinitely more so to the supreme Being, upon the Account of his own Justice and Veracity. It was the Saying of a wise Heathen, remarkable for his just and sublime Ideas of the Divine Nature, *That Truth is God's Essence*: By which he seems to have meant, That Truth is so bright a Jewel, as, even in that Blaze of Glory which encompasseth the Throne of God, to have shone with a most distinguish'd Lustre; insomuch that the rest of those eminent Perfections which jointly contribute to make up God's Essence, are in a manner lost and swallowed up in that single Attribute. This, I say, was a wise  
Heathen's

SERM.  
XIV.

SERM. Heathen's Notion ; but we Christians must not go so far : We must not so magnify and extol one Attribute of the Godhead, as to form mean and unworthy Notions of the rest. It is sufficient therefore in this Case to observe, that tho' Truth is not God's Essence, yet at least it is an essential Attribute, a Property so inseparable from the Divine Nature, that you may as well conceive there is no God at all, as conceive him destitute of this heavenly Perfection. Since therefore all moral Evil is more or less the Object of God's Wrath, as it is more or less repugnant to those Patterns of all Goodness upon Earth, which are essentially inherent in the Divine Nature ; we may conclude, that he, who is *the God of Truth*, cannot but have an utter Aversion to Dissimulation and Falshood, and consequently, that to act a double part between God and the World, to pretend a Zeal for his Glory, at the same time that we are violating his Laws, is an Insult which will be severely punished ; especially since it is declared in Scripture, that *the Lord requireth Truth in the inward parts ; that he will destroy them that speak leasing ; and that he will abhor the deceitful Man.*

But, *Thirdly*, as Hypocrisy is thus odious to Almighty God, by being utterly opposite and repugnant to his Veracity ; so is it no less displeasing to him, as it is a direct and palpable Affront to that awful and stupendous Attribute, his Omnipresence. For tho' no Man who believes there is any God at all, and has spent one Thought in the Contemplation of his Nature, can be ignorant that he is the great Governor and Superintendant of the Universe, that he attends to our Actions at all Times and Places, that *he is about our Paths, and about our Beds, and spieth out all our Ways ; in a word, that he setteth our Misdeeds before him,*

*him, and our secret Sins in the Light of his Countenance*; SERM. tho' no Man, who thinks at all, can help believing XIV. the Truth of this, yet he may behave himself, with respect to God, in as careless and irreverent a manner, as if he believed it not, as if he thought, that when he is retir'd from the observation of the World, he has no Witness or Spectator of his Actions, but that he is at liberty in the Presence of God alone, to give a loose to his most criminal Desires, and to practise those things in Defiance and Contempt of his Creator, which he would not dare to make known to his Fellow-Creatures. I say, in Defiance and Contempt of his Creator; because, tho' it is possible, that at the very time of Commission he may have no formal and deliberate Design of doing Despight to the Majesty of God; nay, possibly may not so much as reflect that he is under his immediate Inspection, yet before he can have brought himself to such a State of Indifference, he must have been guilty of many wilful Sins, he must have used himself to think of God's Presence with less Reverence and Devotion than he ought; in a word, he must have taken some Pains to get rid of that Sense of Shame, to shake off that religious Horror, which the Thoughts of God's Majesty must naturally excite in young and unpractis'd Sinners. So that in this case, Inattention and Forgetfulness being the Effect of a more deliberate Contempt, a Habit of Insensibility contracted by repeated Acts of Disobedience is so far from extenuating his Guilt in the Sight of God, that it does greatly aggravate and inflame it. It is for this Reason that the great Jewish Lawgiver, when he delivers his last Instructions to his Followers, containing Rules and Directions for their Practice, when he was no longer to go in and out before

SERM. *before them*, does frequently inculcate this short but  
 XIV. useful Caution, *Beware lest thou forget the Lord*; and  
 it is observable, that as the whole Compass and Extent of our Duty is sometimes expressed in Scripture by the Phrase of *remembering God*, so it is mentioned as an Instance of consummate Wickedness *to forget him*. *The Wicked shall be turned into Hell*, says David, *and all the People that forget God*. To be wicked, and to forget God, are in his Account synonymous Expressions, and the same Punishment is denounced to both. So that upon the whole, we may cry out to these presumptuous Offenders, as he does in another Place: *Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you*.

After all, it must be fairly acknowledged, that *to set God always before us*, according to the strict and proper Sense of the Word, is more than is expected from any of us; not because it exceeds the bounds of our Duty, but because in this mortal State it is impossible: I doubt not but those blessed Spirits who have the enjoyment of God's Presence in Heaven, *are evermore praising him*, and adoring him in the most exalted Raptures of Gratitude and Thanksgiving: And to have Faculties proportionate to such a vigorous and unwearied Devotion, will be our Happiness as well as Glory hereafter. In the mean time, there are Sins of Inadvertency, from which good Men are not always exempt. And doubtless great Allowance will be made, great Indulgence we are promised in the Gospel, to these Frailties and Infirmities of our Nature. The Thoughts of God's immediate Presence cannot be always kept alive in our Hearts; and if we do but labour to keep up an habitual Sense of it, so as not willingly and designedly to offend him, *he will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss*, but, for the



the sake of his Son's infinite Satisfaction, will accept of our sincere Endeavours. SERM.  
XIV.

'Tis true, he will so : But what will this avail the Hypocrite, who is so far from aiming even at this partial Obedience, that as often as the Sense of God's Majesty breaks in upon his Conscience, he makes it his Business to stifle and suppress it, or (which is worse) to represent him to his Imagination as a tame and easy Being, of no other Consequence and Concernment to him, but as he makes use of his Name in the Execution of his secular Designs, and for the Advancement of his own Credit in the World : For it is the Opinion and Admiration of Men, about which he is principally concerned. And this I lay down as a *Fourth* Consideration, from which his Guilt receives no small Addition, namely, that *he loves the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God* ; the Contempt which is shewn to his Maker being in this Case not a little aggravated, by that comparative Esteem and Veneration which he expresses for the Opinions of his Brethren.

It is true, the Reason why such kind of Behaviour is usually so sharply resented among Men, is Jealousy, a Passion with which we cannot suppose the most High to be affected. *Hear, O House of Israel*, says he, in a most solemn and awful manner, *my Thoughts are not as your Thoughts, not my Ways as your Ways*. And yet he has been pleased in another Place to declare, that he *will not give his Honour to another* ; nay, to put the Matter out of all Dispute, he has affirmed in so many Words, that he *is a jealous God* : By which, thus much at least must be meant, that tho' he is not subject to Jealousy, nor any other Passion, yet in this and such like Cases, he will deal with Mankind in the same manner, as Jealousy, were he capable

SERM. capable of such a Passion, would suggest : It being  
 XIV. the known Rule and Method of God's Proceeding  
 with his Creatures, to confine himself to those No-  
 tions and Apprehensions of things, which they them-  
 selves are capable of entertaining. *Is it any Pleasure*  
*to the Almighty that thou art righteous, or is it Gain to*  
*him, that thou makest thy way perfect ?* And yet,  
 because Praise and Thanksgiving is a Tribute which  
 our Reason tells us is due from a Creature to his  
 Creator, he therefore accepts of *this our bounden Duty,*  
*and with such Sacrifices he is well pleased.* And why  
 may he not also be displeased with our Actions, for  
 no other Reason but the Notions and Designs of the  
 Performer ? That he was so in the case of Idolatry,  
 is evident from the History of the *Canaanites*. *We*  
*know,* says St. Paul, *that an Idol is nothing ;* nothing,  
 you may be sure, in God's Account of it, any fur-  
 ther than as it becomes his Rival and Competitor, by  
 receiving the Homage and Adoration of his People,  
 and being the Object of their misplaced Devotion.  
 Whether therefore those strange Gods, wherewith  
 the *Canaanites* provoked him to displeasure, were in-  
 animate Stocks and Stones, or malignant and apostate  
 Spirits, the Outcasts of Heaven, and declared Ene-  
 mies of his Majesty, it is certain, that as they were  
 his Creatures, the most High could not repine at  
 their Honour, nor be jealous of their Power. It  
 was the Motive and Design of the Idolater, the Prin-  
 ciple upon which he acted, which gave so much  
 offence to the Almighty, and which caused whole  
 Nations and People, by his special Determination  
 and Appointment, to be dispossessed of their Fields and  
 Vineyards, and to be destroyed with Fire and Sword.

What then is Man, that we should make a God of  
 him ? that we should prefer his Censures or his Ap-  
 plause,

plause, before the *favour of the most high and holy one* SERM.  
*that inhabiteth Eternity?* Let him be distinguished by XIV.  
the most shining Titles and Appellations, with which  
human Vanity can be exalted; let him be Master of  
the most consummate Wisdom, or invested with the  
most ample Power; yet why should you be so earnest-  
ly solicitous about his Favour and Esteem? Will he  
judge you at God's Tribunal? Alas! there you will  
see him, either borne on high by Angels into the  
Regions of the Blessed, and pitying your Shame and  
Misery; or else a disconsolate Sinner like your-  
self, waiting to receive his Doom, perhaps *calling*  
*upon the mountains and hills to cover him,* and cursing  
all those whose vain Praises upon Earth have brought  
him to this State of Misery, where he will be plung-  
ed, together with his impious Flatterers, into ever-  
lasting Flames and Torments, *where the worm dieth*  
*not, and the fire is not quenched.*

I shall but just mention one further Consideration,  
by which it will appear, in the *fifth* and *last* Place,  
how dangerous and deplorable the Hypocrite's Con-  
dition will be then found, over and above the Lot of  
other Sinners; and that is, that he does in a most  
eminent and remarkable Manner despise those Means  
of Grace, and neglect those precious Opportunities  
which God is pleased to grant him for his Conversion.  
For in this Sense is the Saying of our Saviour verified,  
that *to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much*  
*required.* Now the Hypocrite, in order to support  
that Form of Godliness which he is constantly to car-  
ry about him in the World, and which takes up no  
small Part of his Thoughts, has more frequent Oc-  
casions of reflecting upon his Duty, than other Sin-  
ners can be supposed to have. For the same Reason

SERM. he has likewise an Opportunity of hearing more useful Exhortations, and is obliged to be more constant at all publick Devotions, than other Sinners can be persuaded to be. When therefore a Man dares to *rush into the presence of the Lord*, with a Heart full of impure Desires, and perhaps at that very Instant intent upon Mischief, like the dissembling Scribes and Pharisees, whom our Lord taxes in the Gospel with *making long prayers, that they might devour widows houses*, surely he must have arrived at a great and transcendent Height of Impiety, that he can so contumeliously despise his Maker, while he is under the immediate Sense of his Duty; while others are with joint Hearts and Affections pouring out their Souls before him, and adoring him with a *welcome tribute of praise and thanksgiving*. For the very Places of religious Worship which he frequents, the common Offices and Forms of Prayer, which are made use of there, so well calculated for the Relief of our Necessities, and composed with such a true Spirit of Christian Piety, together with the decent and orderly Behaviour of his Fellow-Christians, met together to serve God in Unity of Heart, cannot but awaken him to a Sense of his Duty, and put him in mind of his Obligations to perform it. And if, notwithstanding this, he can be cold and insensible in the midst of so much Fervour and Devotion; if he can content himself with the Worship of his Lips, the mere Outside and Formality of Religion, there is this peculiar Aggravation of his Guilt, that it is done under the calmest and coolest Reflexion: It is a deliberate Contempt of God's Worship: He has no sudden Start of Humour, no Gust of impetuous Passion to plead on his behalf: His Transgression can be ascribed to no other Cause, but



but a rooted and inveterate Averſion to all Goodneſs, SERM.  
XIV.  
to a Conſcience ſeared with a hot Iron, and deaf to  
the moſt engaging Motives to Obedience. So that

it is no Wonder that the holy Prophets under the Law denounced God's Judgments, with ſo much Zeal and Severity, againſt a Sin of ſo deep a dye; or that our bleſſed Lord himſelf, who was certainly the very Spirit of Meekneſs, does always raiſe his Voice with an uncommon Warmth and Vehemence, when he has occaſion to take notice of it in his Diſcourſes. *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharifees, Hypocrites:* This is the Crime with which he is ever charging them, and which ſeems to have given him the greateſt Offence, as being, of all Vices, the moſt oppoſite to that Simplicity of Heart which it was the Buſineſs of his Goſpel to inculcate. From hence alſo you may account for the Reason of our Saviour's Declaration in another Place, where he is denouncing God's Wrath againſt Apoſtate Chriſtians, that he *will cut them aſunder, and appoint them their portion with the Hypocrites.* What portion that is like to be, I have mentioned in another place already.

I ſhall conclude therefore with this ſingle Caution, That as bad as Hypocriſy appears, that Man will make but an ill Exchange, who flies out into a more open Rebellion: It is a far better and more rational Way, to be really what he now pretends to be. For that is a very eaſy Taſk. He does already go thro' the moſt painful part of it, which conſiſts in the external Performance: Nay, even *that* is then only painful, when a Man wants the true Spirit of Devotion: When this comes once in to his Aid, Religion is all Peace and Joy: Inſtead of the vain and precarious Applauſe of Men, he

SERM. will have the Applause of God and his holy Angels. In a word, the most rational Delights  
 XIV. will be his Portion here, and eternal Happiness hereafter.

*Which God of his infinite Mercy grant us all, thro' the Merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Power, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, both now and henceforth, and for evermore.*





*All common Forms of Swearing  
forbidden.*

A

S E R M O N

On MATTH. V. 34, 35, 36.

*But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne; nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, for thou canst not make one Hair thereof white or black.*



HIS peremptory Command of our blessed Lord, and another which is copied from it by St. James, is all that the New Testament has taught us, by way of Precept, concerning the Nature and Use of Oaths; which being a kind of Evidence or Testimony to our Veracity, which in many Cases may be legally required of us, and which some of us are too apt to give, whether legally required or not, it shall be my Business in the following Discourse, *First*, To shew the

SERM.  
XV.

SERM. meaning of the Precept itself ; and, *Secondly*, To consider the Doctrine contained in it ; that between  
 XV. both, we may know what is here forbidden, and be furnished also with such Thoughts and Reflexions, as are most likely to discourage us from the Practice of it.

I. I am to shew the meaning of the Precept itself, which though it is expressed in very general Terms, yet that all Oaths are not absolutely forbidden by it, will appear from these following Considerations.

*First*, That the End and Design of Oaths is to determine Controversies and Disputes. *An Oath for Confirmation*, says the Epistle to the Hebrews, is an *End of all Strife* : i. e. it is the best Security we can give to each other for the Truth and Sincerity of our Intentions ; and consequently the best Method to compose those Differences, which the general Corruption and Iniquity of Mens Manners do naturally and almost necessarily produce. Indeed, if Christianity had introduced in fact such a total Reformation of Mens Principles and Affections, as in Theory one would think it might, there had been no need of this, or any other Obligation, to bind us more effectually to the Practice of our Duty, in all our Dealings and Transactions with each other. But since the infinite Purity and Perfection of the Gospel-Precepts is far from having had such an Influence as this ; and since all the Ties of Duty that ever were or can be invented, are little enough to preserve Peace and Order, and to establish that mutual Confidence in each other, without which no Society can subsist, it is not reasonable to think our Saviour would forbid the Use of any Method conducing to so good an End, unless it can be proved to be in its own Nature sinful, and consequently inconsistent with



with the Spirit of that Religion which he came into SERM.  
the World to introduce. But that this was not so in XV.  
the Case before us, will be evident by considering in   
the next Place,

*Secondly*, That so far as any Act of ours can be said to promote the Honour of God, an Oath does most eminently promote it; and that, because it is an Acknowledgment of his infinite Power, and our own Subjection and Dependence thereupon. Agreeable to this are those Words of the Apostle in the sixth Chapter of his Epistle to the *Hebrews*: *For men verily swear by the greater*, i. e. the very Act of Swearing does itself imply that the Person, by whom we swear, is our Superior; in like manner as to be appealed to for the Decision of any doubtful Matter, is looked upon, amongst Men, as a Token of Superiority; and to appeal, as an Instance of Respect. Whenever therefore we swear by the Name of God, we do thereby testify that we are his Subjects and Dependents, under the Inspection of his Wisdom, under the Discipline of his Justice, and within the Reach of his avenging Power. Now, to act like Creatures that have a just Sense of his Attributes and Perfections, is all the Honour we are capable of doing him; and therefore he cannot be displeased with such an Act as this, which confesses his Wisdom to be infinite, his Justice to be as eminent as his Wisdom, and his Power as extensive as both. So that tho' an Oath may, and it is to be feared is often taken in such a careless and disrespectful manner, as is a Proof rather of our Contempt of God, than any reverent and devout Regard to him; yet whenever we swear seriously and considerately, with a strict Regard to Truth, and a just Sense of the solemn Act we are performing, we do naturally lift up our

SERM. Thoughts to that awful Being, to whom we are

XV. making our deliberate Appeal, with such Sentiments and Affections of Mind as, if they were but cloathed in the Garb of Words, would be acknowledg'd to to be an Act of Piety; and therefore to God, who regards the Heart, we may be sure they are as acceptable Tokens of our Respect, as if they were expressed in the most affectionate Language, that the Power of Words can give. The casual and accidental Abuses therefore, by which this Action may be possibly profaned, arising not from the Nature of the thing, but from the Heedlessness or Perverseness of those who use it, is no more a Reason for its being utterly abolish'd, than the irreverent Behaviour, which is sometimes seen in places of Divine Worship, is a Reason why we should *forsake the assembling ourselves together* in them, and give them up as the Seat of Wantonness and Profaneness.

But, *Thirdly*, Another Argument to prove that all Oaths are not absolutely forbidden, is, that whether they are expedient in themselves or not, they are certainly required by human Laws, and were so when this Precept was deliver'd: So that if our Saviour had forbid the Use of them, he must have either put his Disciples upon contesting with their lawful Governors, about a thing which they had a Right to require, or else he must have prevailed with all Governments in the World, to release his Disciples from their Duty in this Respect; a thing, which though the Lenity of our own Government in particular, lest it should wound any tender Conscience, has been pleased to indulge to a wilful Set of People, who would not be content without it; yet that it is far from being the Case of all Governments in general, I need not go about to prove.

But.

But, *Fourthly*, If we had no other Argument to SERM.  
 prove that all Oaths are not absolutely forbidden, XV.  
 the Examples of our Saviour and his Apostle *St. Paul*,  
 afford us a most indisputable Proof of it; the latter  
 of which has frequently in his Epistles, upon great  
 and urgent Occasions, such solemn and religious  
 Asseverations, as contain every thing essential to an  
 Oath; and the former did actually, in a judicial  
 Manner, at the Command of the proper Magistrate,  
 consent to take an Oath himself. For so we are to  
 understand those Words of *St. Matthew*, that the  
 High-priest said to Jesus upon his Trial, *I adjure*  
*thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou*  
*be the Christ, the Son of God.* Upon which Jesus said  
 unto him, *Thou hast said.* Now this Reply to the  
 Adjuration of the Priest was, according to the Prac-  
 tice of the *Jews* in those Matters, as truly and pro-  
 perly an Oath, as if, according to the Method in  
 use among us, he had actually laid his right hand  
 upon the Law, and kissed it most religiously with  
 his Lips. For so says the Rule expressly, *Lev. vi. 1.*  
*If a Soul sin, and bear the Voice of Swearing, and is a*  
*Witness whether he hath seen or known of it, if he do*  
*not utter it, then he shall bear his Iniquity; i. e. if any*  
*Man be cited before a Magistrate as an Offender,*  
*and has the Form of Adjuration pronounced to him,*  
*requiring his Testimony even against himself, if he*  
*does not, by virtue of his Oath, declare all that he*  
*knows of that Matter, he shall be guilty.* In pur-  
 suance therefore of this Law, when the High-priest  
 had pronounced the Words of Adjuration, our  
 Saviour was then actually upon his Oath, and his  
 immediate Reply to the Point in question, was, on  
 his part, a Confession that he was so; which Con-  
 fession was the more remarkable, because till he had

SERM. heard *the voice of Swearing*, he preserved a most  
 XV. invincible Silence: So that his answering as he did,  
 is a most convincing Argument, not only that an  
 Oath is in some Cases lawful, but moreover, that  
 when it is required by the proper Magistrate, it is in  
 that Case unlawful to refuse it.

Thus much for the first Point to be settled upon  
 this Subject, *viz.* that whatever be meant by this  
 Precept of our Saviour, it could never be intended to  
 forbid the Use of all Oaths in general, as, from a  
 partial Observation of the bare Letter of the Text,  
 some People have been so weak as to imagine.

I come now to consider the Text itself, which, to  
 avoid such a critical Examination of the several parts  
 of it, as would be of use but to few of my Hearers,  
 I shall explain by a Paraphrase.

*Ye have heard*, says our Saviour, *that it has been*  
*said by them of old time*, *thou shalt not forswear thy-*  
*self*, *but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths*; i. e.  
 whatsoever thou dost either promise or assert upon  
 Oath, thou must take care, if it be an Assertion,  
 that it be true; and if it be a Promise, that it be  
 punctually fulfilled; as thou wouldest answer for the  
 contrary to the Lord thy God, by whose holy Name  
 thou swearest. This is the Substance of what you  
 understand to have been said upon this Subject by  
*Moses*, in several Precepts and Directions of the Law;  
 in consequence of which, provided you swear to the  
 Truth, and provided you do not swear by the Name  
 of God himself (from which indeed you do reli-  
 giously abstain) you think yourselves at liberty to  
 use any less solemn Oath, upon the most trifling Occa-  
 sions that can happen; by which means, it seems,  
 some Forms of Swearing are at last become so fami-  
 liar to you, that you begin to think they may be  
 lawfully



lawfully used, without exposing you to the Guilt of SERM.  
 Perjury. But I say unto you, that even these se- XV.  
 condary Forms of Swearing, which you think so  
 very innocent and insignificant, are too solemn to be  
 so profaned. *Swear not at all* therefore in your or-  
 dinary Discourse (for of Judicial Cases I am not  
 speaking) but swear not, I say, in your ordinary  
 Discourse, not so much as by the Heaven, or the  
 Earth, or any other of those secondary Oaths, in  
 which, though the Name of God is not expressly  
 mentioned, yet at least it is intentionally implied.  
 For whosoever swears by Heaven, does, in effect,  
 swear by him that is enthroned in it; whosoever  
 swears by the Earth, swears by him that presides  
 over it, and governs it; whosoever swears by *Jeru-*  
*salem*, swears by him to whom it is peculiarly ap-  
 propriated; and whosoever swears by his own Head,  
 or any Creature in which he seems to have a Pro-  
 perty himself, does in effect swear by him who made  
 it what it is, and to whom therefore it does most  
 eminently belong. As therefore these, and such like  
 Oaths, do all terminate and center in God, they  
 must not be admitted into your ordinary Discourse.  
 Let it be sufficient on such occasions, to say, *Yea,*  
*Yea*; or *Nay, Nay*: Be content with a serious Af-  
 firmation or Denial, *for whatsoever is more than these,*  
*cometh of Evil*; i. e. It proceeds from the Treachery  
 which is amongst you, that you have need upon  
 every trivial occasion to give such proofs of your  
 upright Dealing; and it proceeds from some evil  
 Principle in your Hearts, or the Suggestions of some  
 evil Spirit that has an Influence over them, that  
 you are so forward upon all occasions, by implica-  
 tion at least, *to take the Name of the Lord your God*  
*in vain.*

Thus

SERM. Thus much for the meaning of the Precept itself ;  
 XV. which having thus opened and explained to you, I  
 proceed now to the *Second* thing proposed, which  
 was,

H. To consider the Doctrine contained in it.

The practice of Swearing in our ordinary Discourse, which is the only thing forbidden in my Text, is in our time become so very general and prevailing, that (if we consider how little can be said in the Defence of it) one would think it had not been forbidden, but commanded. For a Man, without proposing either Pleasure or Advantage, to fly in the Face of Almighty Power, by daily repeating the most provoking Indignities, is a Practice so stupid and absurd, as well as wicked, that common Sense cannot find a Name for it; and one would wonder how Satan himself with all his Cunning should have found means to countenance and support it. A *Jew* would have shudder'd at such dreadful Imprecations as Christians utter without Horror or Remorse. As if the common Forms of Blasphemy grew tiresome by Repetition, they are continually diversifying their Phrases with such a strange Collection of new-invented Curses, that one would think they made it their Study to dishonour the Name of God, and strove who should be most eloquent in profaning it.

What shall we say to these things? Can those who do thus, be ignorant of their Guilt? If not, to what purpose should we tell them of it? Or do they want only to be put in mind of it? However it be, it is our Duty to represent the Case to them, and leave the rest to the Grace of God.

*First* then, I desire it may be seriously considered, that when Men give themselves such a Liberty in  
 their

their ordinary Discourse, the Guilt of Perjury SERM. can hardly be avoided: For, as in a multitude of XV. words there wanteth not Sin, and among other Sins, Falshood in particular; so whenever there is a Multitude of Oaths too, they will be sometimes accompanied with Falshood as well as Truth, and be used to attest both promiscuously.

*Secondly*, Let it be considered further, that as an awful Sense of Oaths tends to the Establishment of Peace and Order, and to the Well-being of Societies in general, so the profane and irreligious use of them does, on the contrary, tend to weaken their Evidence, and consequently to destroy that useful End, which they were instituted and intended to promote.

*Thirdly*, Let us reflect on what has been said already, concerning Oaths taken seriously and devoutly; and let us consider, that to swear rashly is the Reverse of it; it is acting as if God was either ignorant of our Guilt, or had not Justice or Power enough to punish it; either of which is such a blasphemous Suggestion, as is almost too shocking to be spoken of.

*Lastly*, If there were nothing else to be considered in this matter, but the positive Prohibition of God himself, methinks *That* should be enough to move us; especially in a matter wherein it would be so easy to comply, and wherein there is no Temptation to the contrary. For let any Man, who makes so free with the Name of God, consider how he himself should like to be so wilfully disobeyed by an Inferior, in any such strict and peremptory Command; and then he will see in what Light he stands before our Father which is in Heaven; and have reason to admire that lingering Justice, which could

SERM. could not be provoked by such repeated Indignities, to execute its Vengeance sooner.

XV.

I have purposely forbore to enlarge on these Points, because I would recommend them to those who are guilty, as an employment for their private Thoughts; and if they will but reflect upon them seriously, they will soon find, that as short as they are, they will afford matter enough for their Meditation, and by the Grace of God most effectually convince them of the Necessity of a speedy Change: As, on the other hand, if any one in that wretched State will not afford them such a private Consideration, I am very sure, that for any Good they will do *him*, it is not worth my while to enlarge upon them.

I go on therefore for the Benefit of those who are not quite so bad, to take notice of that secondary kind of Oaths, by the Name of some Creature only, some of which you find specified in my Text, and of which there are a Multitude in common use amongst Christians, so natural and familiar to the Tongues of some, that they seem to think they have no Meaning at all in them. The Case was just the same among the *Jews*: They had adopted these Oaths into their ordinary Discourse, that they might not be tempted to swear by any greater. In process of time they were so prostituted and profaned, that they ceased to be considered any longer as Oaths, and were looked upon as words of course. To supply the Place of these, when they had occasion to shew they were in earnest, they were forced to make use of new ones; which, for some time, gave a greater Degree of Credit to their Discourse. This seems to have been the Foundation of that Distinction in the 23d of St. *Matthew*, between swearing



ing by the Temple, and the Gold of it; and again, between swearing by the Altar, and by the Gift. Not that they could be so stupid as to think there was any greater degree of Sanctity in the latter; but the former being plainly the more obvious Oaths, might perhaps be worn out before, *i. e.* they might be used so familiarly about the meereſt Trifles, that the Scribes might from thence take occasion to declare, that he who made use of them in his ordinary Conversation, might reasonably be presumed not to have intended to swear, and consequently might be excused from the Obligation. But for this their pretended Accuracy, our Saviour reprimands them very sharply, telling them, That whatever Ideas they might please to annex to this or that Form of Swearing, yet the Obligation of the Oath would be estimated according to the nature of the thing, and not according to their arbitrary Interpretations. *Whether, says he, is greater, the Gift, or the Altar which sanctifieth the Gift?*

The same may be said of all Oaths of this nature, which are at present in use among Christians. How little soever we may mean by using them, yet as they have in their nature a Meaning of their own, with a peculiar reference to Almighty God, they ought not to be profaned. We may habituate ourselves, by constant practice, to the most sacred of all Oaths that can be named, till it is attended with no Horror in the speaking. But would this be any Argument of our Innocence? Why should it be thought then, that in Oaths of a less solemn nature, our own Thoughtlessness and Inattention should excuse us? For why did we not attend to it? That which we make our Excuse, is our Fault. Whatever has any relation to God, must never be pronounced

SERM. nounced *without Attention, nay, never* without the utmost Reverence. Some say, They mean nothing by it; it is a mere Expletive for the Ornament of their Discourse. And yet it is plain, from the manner of their using it, that they expect it should add some kind of Weight, that is, they expect to make themselves believed by the Use of an Expression which has no Meaning in it. On the other hand, if they have a Meaning, it must be such a one as they cannot justify. The Oath must terminate either in the Creatures themselves, according to the Sense in which it was taken by the Heathens, from whom most of these Forms were borrowed; or else, according to the Notion of the *Jews* about those Oaths which they acknowledged to be binding, it must be understood as having a Relation to the Creator: The former of which would be downright Idolatry; and the latter, in those common Cases in which alone it is ever used, is Profaneness. There are indeed some Forms of Speaking, which have a very near Affinity with these, and yet may be very lawfully used, as meaning no more, when they come to be explained, than, *as surely as such a Thing is so, so sure is the Truth of what I tell you.* But as it requires some Nicety and Exactness to distinguish them from the others which are criminal, I shall not take upon me to mention them, it being better to avoid them utterly, than by needless insisting upon the Use of what we take to be innocent, run the risk of profaning the Name of God, or giving Offence to those who think we do so.

I have done with the Oaths themselves, and shall now examine the Excuses that are made for them, the principal of which is, Heat of Passion; and so far at least this must be allowed to be an Excuse, That many of those who are more sparing at other times,

times, are at such times most profuse in their Execra-  
tions. But one Sin can never justify another. Now  
Anger, indulged to such a Vehemence as this, is it-  
self a very criminal Excess; inasmuch as it flows from  
a Mind not sufficiently resigned to the Will of God,  
not mortified and subdued to Vexations and Disap-  
pointments, nor sensible of its own Frailties and Im-  
perfections. It is indeed a Sign that the Man is off  
his Guard, and that he does not offend wilfully and  
deliberately. But sure it is but a slender Mitigation  
of one's Guilt, that one is not altogether so presump-  
tuous as the worst. However, if Anger is so apt to  
betray us into a Sin so very heinous and offensive,  
why is not some Care taken, when the Fit is off, to  
prepare against the next Return of it? Is it consistent,  
think you, with that Reverence which we owe to  
God, to know that there is a certain Passion, which,  
whenever we are under the Dominion of it, never  
fails to transport us into the Breach of our Duty, and  
yet to provide no Method for the Cure of it? Or is  
Anger such a stubborn and unruly Passion, that no  
Method can be contrived to tame it? What if every  
time the Fit was rising, we made it a Rule to divert  
the Force of it, by thinking on some other thing?  
What if, as some have very well advised, before we  
replied to a Provocation given us, we should, for the  
better Recollection of our Reason, make a very short  
Pause? Or, which is a better way, bestow the same  
time upon a short Petition, to be delivered from the  
ill Effects of Anger? This is no more than may be  
easily done, without so much as being observed by  
any one; the time to be employed about it being no  
more than is sufficient to lift up our Thoughts to  
Heaven, where they will be received with as much  
Favour and Approbation without the help of words,

SERM. as with them. The Consequence of which will be,  
 XV. that the Person who makes this devout Request, is  
 thereby not only put upon his Guard against the Violence of the Temptation, so as to do all in his own Power to oppose it, but does likewise engage God's Succour and Assistance, which will be sure to supply all Defects; enabling him to do that, by virtue of the Divine Grace, which by his own Power he was not able to effect.

But, *Secondly*, Another Excuse which is made for Common-Swearing, by those who are more guilty than the former, is the Force of Custom, which is what is meant by those, who, when they are reproved for this Offence, reply readily, That they cannot help it; *i. e.* the Habit of Sinning is grown so inveterate, that by frequently repeating it, they have lost the Government of their Tongues, which are thereby become the Servants of another Master, and are constantly ready for the Service of *Satan*, to utter every thing that he suggests. But is it not worth while for such Men as these to take some pains to subdue a Habit, which, if it continues, will inevitably destroy them? Or have they already given up the Point, as a thing utterly impracticable; and so go on chearfully in the Course they have begun, with the Prospect of eternal Ruin? If so, there is nothing more to be said; they must even persist in their obstinate Disobedience, till they are awakened by the due Reward of it. But if there be any thing in the Fear of this, sufficient to discourage them, it would surely be no hard Matter for a willing Mind to break loose from such a senseless Custom. Would it not be possible, for a valuable Consideration, to abstain for a single Day? If so, why not for ten? Nay, why not for Months and Years? Would it not be worth while.



while, in order to promote so good an End, to be SERM.  
 more sparing of our Words in general? Is any thing, XV.  
 the wisest of us says, of so much Consequence, either  
 to ourselves or others, that we need venture our eter-  
 nal Happiness, for the bare Pleasure of hearing our-  
 selves say it? Where would be the Harm, if to  
 subdue such a stubborn Enemy, we would learn to  
 practise a little Self-Denial in the great Article of  
 impertinent Discourse? What if we should resolve,  
 till this Work was finished, to say nothing but what  
 is strictly necessary? I mention this, as the utmost  
 Hardship a Man can possibly be put to, to get rid of  
 the most inveterate Habit. And surely it is worth  
 while to try it, when no less than our eternal Happi-  
 ness is at stake; not but if any Man, who is thorough-  
 ly persuaded of the Necessity of reforming this vici-  
 ous Habit, will pray to God for his Grace to assist him  
 in so necessary a Work, I think I need not scruple to  
 assure him, it may be done upon much easier terms.

But, *Thirdly*, The worst of all Excuses that are  
 made for this wicked Practice, is the Necessity of do-  
 ing it, in many Cases, in order to obtain among our  
 Equals, Credit, and among our Inferiors, Authority  
 and Respect. Concerning which let it be first obser-  
 ved, That he who makes such an Excuse as this,  
 does fairly acknowledge, that he sins wilfully and  
 deliberately. He does not pretend to say he cannot  
 help it. There is an End most considerately proposed  
 by it, for the sake of which he thinks fit to commit  
 the Sin, and run the Hazard of the future Punish-  
 ment. Now when a Man is so daring and presump-  
 tuous as this, it is in vain to talk to him about the  
 Heinousness of the Sin. For about this he professes  
 himself to have no Concern, I shall shew therefore,  
 that he is mistaken in his Policy; that the End he  
 aims

SERM. aims at, is not to be so gain'd ; and that the Practice  
 XV. of Common-Swearing, whatever he may think of it,  
 will procure him neither Credit nor Respect.

For, *First*, as to procuring him Credit among his Equals, shall I believe a Man, who is continually convincing me by every Word he speaks, that he makes no Conscience of any thing ? or is that Man, think you, fit to be believed, who makes no Scruple upon the slightest Occasions, to provoke Almighty Vengeance ? If the Fear of God is no Restraint upon him, what Reason can I have to trust him ? His Regard, he will say, to his own Credit and Reputation ; which is as much as to own, that if he were sure to be undiscovered, he would make no Conscience of deceiving you. And is this all the Credit a Man can hope to gain, by the Loss of his eternal Happiness ? The same that we allow to the worst Men upon Earth ? If so, how much better were it to avoid the Sin, and take our Chance to be believed without it ! Promises and Protestations, Vows and Curses, do but render what we say, suspected ; whereas Honesty and Simplicity, without taking any pains about it, are sure of being credited and believed. Let a Man be but strictly just : let him be punctual in all his Dealings ; let him be careful of what he says and does ; let him be free from Lyes as well as Oaths, and he will soon be Master of more Credit than any Man can gain by Swearing.

But, *Secondly*, As this blasphemous Abuse of Oaths is by no means fitted to gain Credit among our Equals, so neither has it any better Pretence to procure Authority or Respect among Inferiors. It is true, that an Inferior may be sometimes silenced by boisterous and outrageous Clamours ; but what Opinion must a Servant or Inferior, if he be a good Man, entertain

of

of such a wicked Master? Must he not despise and SERM.  
contemn him? Must he not think him, in one re- XV.  
spect, inferior even to him, however Circumstances  
of Birth and Fortune may have made him in another  
respect his Superior? Vice is a great Leveller of all  
Distinctions; and no Man will ever preserve his Au-  
thority by the Forfeiture of his Virtue, any more  
than he can cause himself, by the most skilfull Ma-  
nagement, to be at once both respected and despised.  
On the other hand, if this Servant or Inferior, whose  
Obedience you are endeavouring to secure, should  
chance to be as wicked as yourself, as the Example  
of so ill a Master may very probably make him, what  
Authority can you expect to preserve, what Obe-  
dience is it likely should be performed by one, who  
has no Sense of his Duty to your common Master?  
Let but the Fear of God take possession of our Hearts,  
and it will not fail to produce a suitable Behaviour  
in all Circumstances and Relations of Life. But de-  
stroy that, and there is no Security that we shall do  
our Duty in any Station we possess: There is no  
knowing how to govern or obey: In a word, there  
is no hope of our being either good Masters, or  
good Servants, good Neighbours, or good Men.

And now, I think enough has been said to discour-  
age you from a Practice so wicked and absurd. If  
any thing more is necessary to be added, it should  
be a short Exhortation to those who are as yet free  
from this Sin, to take heed, lest they suffer it to steal  
upon them from the Examples of any profligate Com-  
panions; as well as to those who are but young Be-  
ginners, to draw back betimes, before they have  
either multiplied the Number of their Sins, or increas-  
ed the Habit of Sinning. And if any of those who  
hear me this Day, are so unhappy as to be tempted

to

SERM. to the Commission of this Sin, by those whom it is their

XV. Duty to love and honour, and who ought therefore to teach them better (for some such Parents and Masters to be sure there are, who, instead of checking their Children and Servants whom they find guilty of this Sin, do but encourage them to it by their own scandalous Examples) If this, I say, should be the Case of any of you, let it be considered, that tho' the Parent or Master will severely answer for his Misbehaviour in this Case, yet this will by no means excuse the misguided Child or Servant, who, contrary to his own better Judgment, is drawn into a resemblance of his Parent's or Master's Vice. On the other hand, what an exalted piece of Virtue would it be in the more intelligent Child, not only to draw back himself, and from henceforth to preserve his Conscience unfulled, though encompassed and beset with Dangers; but also by a more conspicuous exactness in his Behaviour, become a Pattern and Example even to his Parents! God grant that by this, or whatever other means to his Wisdom shall seem most expedient, we may be all brought to a just Sense of our Duty, in this great and important Article, remembering always the great Abhorrence which God has expressed to this Sin in particular, declaring solemnly, that *he will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain.*







*We are to prove, and then hold fast  
that which is good.*

A

## S E R M O N

Preached at a VISITATION.

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JOHN i. 46.

*And Nathaniel said unto him, can there  
any good thing come out of Nazareth?  
Philip saith unto him, come and see.*



THE two Persons concerned in this SERM.  
Dialogue were both of them Men XVI.  
of upright Intentions; both of them  
sincere in their different Persuasions,  
and acting upon true Principles of  
Conscience. The only difference to  
be observed in their Characters; is, that *Philip* had  
received *Jesus* as the Messiah; but *Nathaniel*, for  
want of Evidence to convert him, stuck fast to his  
*Jewish* Prejudices; and, if he had ever heard of the  
Name of *Jesus*, had hitherto rejected him as an Im-  
postor.

SERM. postor. *Philip*, however, was so well assured of his  
 XVI. Sincerity as to believe, that by proper Arguments  
 he might be persuaded to renounce his Error. Accordingly, in the foregoing Verse, he attempts it. *Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, we have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph;* to which *Nathaniel* replies in my Text, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* And *Philip*, without answering his Objection, appeals only to his own Judgment and Understanding, inviting him to come and see.

Now because it may be the case of any of us to labour under Prejudices, like *Nathaniel*; and because it is the duty of all Christians in general, more especially of those who bear office in the Church, to endeavour, like *St. Philip*, to the utmost of their Power, to remove them out of the Minds of others, I shall take occasion from the behaviour of these two righteous Persons, to consider our own Duty in both these respects, by calling to your remembrance such Rules and Directions for Practice, as their Examples do naturally suggest. The only thing observable in the Character of *Nathaniel* is the Nature of the Prejudice he had imbibed; *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* *Nazareth* was, it seems, a poor despicable City, or, as some say, a small Village of *Galilee*; and *Galilee* itself was so odious to the *Jews*, that the very Name of *Galilean* was a Reproach. *Thou hast vanquished me, O Galilean,* was the Acknowledgment of one, who in the bitterness of his Heart could not help blaspheming his Conqueror, at the same time that he confessed his Power. The same Title was given also to the Apostles, who, till they changed it for the Name of Christians

Christians at *Antioch*, were constantly styled *Nazarenes* and *Galileans*; for the same reason *Jesus* was called the *Nazarene*, as were also the first Converts to Christianity, who, though they were far from being ashamed of the Appellation, (as we may see from *St. Peter's* use of it in the third Chapter of the *Acts*) seem nevertheless to have it fixed on them by their Enemies with a malicious Design to make their Persons despicable, and bring their Doctrines into Disrepute.

Now all the Foundation of this Prejudice against *Galilee*, besides an ancient Dislike that was taken to it upon the account of its corrupt Religion, was, that *out of Galilee no prophet had arisen*; from whence it was very weakly and preposterously concluded, that *out of Galilee no prophet could arise*. It is easy at this distance of time to see the Absurdity of such Reasoning as this; and yet the Strength of the Prejudice was then so great, that it misled the wisest Men amongst them. You find it urged by the great Consistory of the Nation to *Nicodemus*, who was himself a Doctor of the Law. Search and see, for *out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*. He is appealed to as a Man of Learning and Judgment, capable of searching into the Grounds of the Tradition; and yet, though he was desirous to vindicate our Saviour, he never offers to make a Reply to the Objection. From all this it is natural to observe, how far the Prejudices of Education may carry us; how the wildest and most inconclusive Reasoning may pass for solid and substantial Argument, the crudest and most indigested Notions be admitted for established Truths, when they are supported by popular Opinion, and the plausible Pretence of a religious Zeal. Such Objections as were urged by the

**SERM.** *Jews* against *Christ*, are still urged against the Christian Church; I mean against that pure and reformed part of it which is, by God's Blessing, established in these Realms. *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* was the Question of the unbelieving *Jews*. *Can there any good thing come out of Rome?* Can a Church built out of the Ruins of Popery, and which retains so many of her needless Ceremonies, be a truly Apostolick Church? is the Question of our Dissenting Brethren. On the other hand, it is argued with as much Warmth by the *Romanists*, *Can there any good thing come from the Spirit of the Reformers?* Can Men of such Passions and Resentments, who appear by their whole Conduct and Behaviour to have been acted either by Avarice or Revenge, be supposed to have intended the Good of Mens Souls; or to have had the Interests of Religion at heart? Was not the Reformation accomplished with such Views and Motives, and upon such Principles of human Policy, as favour'd more of this World than the next? Now these and such like Questions, whether they have any Foundation in Fact or no, are quite beside the Subject in dispute. The way to discover whether *Jesus* were the Messiah, was to consider his Life and Actions, his Doctrines and his Miracles, and if they agreed with the Description given by *Moses* and the Prophets, no matter in what City he was educated, nor what opprobrious Titles he might bear. So again, in our Disputes at present, if we would know whether the Religion professed in this Nation, be the Religion of Christ, or no, we have nothing to do, but to consult our Bibles; and if it appears to be built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-Stone*, no matter by what



what means the Reformation was effected, nor out of what Church we sprung.

SERM.  
XVI.

But it is the Fault of all Sects and Parties, that they first conceive an ill Opinion of their Adversaries, and then refuse to hearken to their Arguments. It is pity, so good a Religion as ours should be taken up upon no better Grounds. But if we will harbour such Prejudices and Aversions, it is more our Good-Fortune, than our Merit, that we are ever in the right. For upon the same Grounds, that we embrace a right Religion, we might, if our Birth and Education had led us to it, as readily have embraced a wrong one. It is the Advice of the Apostle to *prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.* Instead of that, we resolve to hold fast one thing, and reject all others, whether good or bad. Now what Virtue is there in such a Faith as this; or what can be pleaded in its behalf, that may not with as much reason be urg'd against it? If People are not so candid and ingenuous, as to allow the Arguments of their Adversaries a fair Examination; in the first Place, if they are in the wrong, it is plain they can never rectify their Error; and in the next Place, if they happen to be right, which is more than they can be sure they are, they will never be able to convince an Adversary; because it will appear from their whole Conduct and Behaviour, that they are governed by mere Prejudice and Partiality.

But there is another very dangerous Prepossession of this kind, which is taken, not against any Sect or Party, but against the Persons and Characters of Men. Now, when we happen to take such a Dislike to our Teachers, there cannot be a greater Hindrance to our Reformation. Had *Nathaniel* con-

SERM. *tinued in his first Opinion, that nothing good could*

XVI. *come out of Nazareth, all that our Saviour said, had*

*been lost on him. This, I am afraid, is a very common Case. We first entertain an Aversion to the Person, and then the best Advice is useless. And yet, if we would consider this Matter as we ought, the Blame would all fall upon ourselves. For allowing the Person who undertakes to teach me, to be a wicked and immoral Man (which is the worst Case that can be supposed) yet why may not I be the better for his Instruction? He may very well understand his Duty, and know how to recommend it to others, though he has not the Grace to practise it. A Person that is serious and well-disposed, will not consider the Man, but the Doctrine; and I am afraid it is more the Fault of the Hearer than the Speaker, when an earnest Exhortation to the Practice of our Duty does not meet with a suitable Effect. So again, with respect to the Preacher's Abilities; if I have not a great opinion of his Parts and Learning, yet sure I may afford him my Attention. I hope no body who undertakes to preach the Gospel, is unacquainted with the plain Duties of Christianity? and if so, there is none so ignorant but the wisest of us may receive Benefit from his Advice. There are few who want to be taught their Duty so much, as to be put in mind of it; and if the Importance of the Subject will not excite our Attention, all the Treasures of Eloquence will be thrown away upon us. They may perhaps make an Impression upon the Ear, but they will never have an Influence upon the Heart; such a one, at least, as will be permanent and lasting, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*

But

But there is a strange Revolution in the State of <sup>SERM.</sup> Preaching, since it was first introduced amongst us. <sup>XVI.</sup> It was intended for the Hearer's Benefit; and he was content, while the Hour-Glass was running, to give ear to the Physician of his Soul, who with great Freedom laid open his Maladies, and then prescribed a Method for the Cure of them. But we are now grown such Casuists in Divinity, that nobody thinks he wants Instruction. The Preacher is considered as a Person, who, for the space of half an Hour, is obliged, for the Diversion or Amusement of his Audience, to stand the Mark of publick Censure. 'Tis a great chance if any body is the better for him; and 'tis well if he preserves his Character. The Truth is, we sit down to a Sermon as to an Entertainment, where, beside the substantial Duties of Religion, we expect something of the Garniture of Art; some lofty Flight of Fancy, some Beauty or Majesty of Expression, or some surprising turn of Thought. If the Preacher has too just a Sense of what he is about, to gratify such itching Ears, we are sure *nothing good can come from him*; so we even employ our Thoughts some other way, or compose ourselves very comfortably to sleep. Now I appeal to any sober and considerate Person, whether People who come to Church with such Views and Expectations, are likely to be the better for Instruction, and whether it be not more the Fault of themselves, than their Teachers, if they return no better Christians than they came.

But I am afraid this ugly Prejudice is sometimes carried further still, and falls upon the whole Order in general. Considering the Opinion which some People form, or would make us believe they form of our Order, I should think it no strange or surprising

SERM. Question, Can there any good thing come from the

XVI. Priesthood? Can People, whose Business it is to teach us, and who are maintained and supported for so doing, be supposed to have any other View in what they tell us, but to secure their own Interest and Advantage? We must in Charity suppose, that those who make this Objection, do not in their Hearts allow the Force of it. Otherwise we may be tempted to think, that they would not scruple, if their Necessities required it; to act such a part themselves. However, if they do believe it in good earnest, they certainly lie under the greatest Disadvantage, the greatest Incapacity to receive Instruction, that Ignorance and Prejudice can expose them to. But here, I cannot but observe how unreasonable it is, that People who are such Advocates for the Liberty of Thinking, and call so loudly to have their own Notions consider'd, should condemn the Doctrines of a whole Order of Men, without allowing them the Favour of being heard. They have, doubtless, a Right to judge for themselves, and to examine all Arguments that are propos'd to them, and it would be well if they did it more than they do. But it is a cruel and injurious abuse of that Liberty, first to cast odious Reflexions upon the Name of their Adversaries, and then call Religion, Artifice. This is the Effect of downright Prejudice, and directly contrary to that favourite Notion, which they themselves seem so forward to advance. But whosoever attempts to reform Mens Manners, will be sure to meet with Enemies enough. To what else can we impute that Spirit of Censure and Opposition, which the Ministers of Christ so often meet with, in the Discharge of their sacred Functions? that Readiness to expose their little Errors and Miscarriages, and sometimes to tra-  
duce



duce even their Virtues; the Dislike and Aversion SERM.  
which Men conceive against their Duty, passes over XVI.  
to the Persons of those who teach it, and from their  
Persons to their Characters and Profession, till at last  
the very Name of their Order, through the prevail-  
ing Corruption of Mens Manners, comes to be treat-  
ed with Ignominy and Contempt. Hence it is, that  
neither the Circumstances of their Fortune, nor the  
Qualities and Dispositions of their Mind, are weighed  
in the same Balance, or interpreted with the same  
favourable Allowances, which are claimed by other  
Men. A serious and composed Behaviour is Morose-  
ness, and Chearfulness is Wantonness: To enjoy the  
Delights of Life is Sensuality; and to abandon them,  
Superstition or Hypocrisy: To be courteous and affa-  
ble, is to be cringing and designing; and to be distant  
and reserved, is Pride: And in general, there is  
scarce any thing in their Conduct, however innocent  
and indifferent in itself, which does not contract an  
imaginary Malignity from the Character of the Per-  
son who performs it, and give an Occasion to his be-  
ing censured, blackened and defamed. It would be  
well, if those who are most forward in propagating,  
or most hasty in giving Credit to these unjustifiable  
Clamours, would consider what End they serve by it.  
If they are really concerned for the Interest of Re-  
ligion, as they will all pretend they are, how do  
they think this End can be promoted, by striking at  
the Credit and Reputation of those, whose Business  
it is to propagate and support it? Why are they set  
up as the Marks of Obloquy and Derision, to the  
great Offence of unprejudiced Persons, who might  
otherwise be the better for their Instruction?

But to proceed with the Character of *Nathaniel*.  
Another Thing which deserves our notice is, that

SERM. notwithstanding the Prejudice he laboured under, he  
 XVI. is represented as an honest Man. *Jesus saw Nathaniel*  
 coming to him, and saith of him, *Behold an Israelite*  
*indeed, in whom is no Guile.* Now this noble Testi-  
 mony was given to his Integrity, at a time when he  
 had been just objecting to the Person of our Saviour,  
 upon the Strength of the Prejudice he had conceived.  
 A thing which should be well considered by those,  
 who will not allow the least Grain of Sincerity to  
 People who are of a different Persuasion. We, who  
 have so much Charity for each other, as to suppose  
 all of our own Religion to be sincere, will allow no  
 Quarter to our Adversaries. Proud and Obstinate,  
 Wilful and Uncomplying, are the best Epithets we  
 usually afford them; as if they differ'd with us for  
 the mere Pleasure of Contention, and took a De-  
 light in being persecuted and opposed. God forbid,  
 that we should give way to the Errors of such Men,  
 or allow them any Advantage to their Cause, but  
 what Charity obliges us to allow them! But God  
 forbid, that we should judge their Hearts, or charge  
 them with persisting wilfully in an Error!

The Dissenters from the Discipline of our Church,  
 we look upon as a peevish and perverse sort of Peo-  
 ple; and indeed, as they are sometimes treated, it is  
 no Wonder if they are peevish and perverse. To  
 charge Men with wilful Blindness, when they may  
 be conscious of no such thing; to stigmatize them  
 with reproachful Titles; and to magnify every Scr-  
 uple into Sin, may very naturally excite their Zeal,  
 which never exerts itself with more warmth and vi-  
 gour, than when it is founded upon Prejudice and  
 Mistake. As therefore these rash and uncharitable  
 Censures are for the most part the Effect of Prejudice,  
 and as such can by no Means be justified, though  
 they

they spring from a very laudable Design; so, if they<sup>SERM.</sup> were ever so justifiable, no wise Man would use them, <sup>XVI.</sup> because they have an ill Effect on the Tempers of those People, for whose Benefit they should be principally designed; for, to tax Men with Pride and Obstinacy, is not the Way to make them less proud and obstinate than they are; but rather to exasperate and inflame them, to widen the Breach that is between us, and to furnish Matter for endless Jealousy and Dislike.

I have done with the Character of *Nathaniel*, and the Observations I had to make from it: Which are, *first*, That we should be extremely careful lest we harbour any Prejudices ourselves: And, *secondly*, That we should be very tender and indulgent when we observe them in other Men.

I come now to consider the Character of *St. Philip*, who appears, by the whole Interview with *Nathaniel*, to have had a hearty Concern to promote the Happiness of his Neighbour, and to have taken the best Method to effect it.

*First*, I say it appears from this Interview with *Nathaniel*, that he had a hearty Desire to promote the Happiness of his Neighbour. *Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.* It is observed, that the words of the Evangelist imply something more than an accidental Meeting, and that it looks as if *Philip* went in quest of *Nathaniel*, on purpose to deliver the glad tidings of Salvation. But whether this be so or not, it is plain he took the first Opportunity, it being but the Day before, that he had the Happiness to be converted himself. This is a Practice which the Civility of the present Age has put almost

SERM. out of Countenance. It is grown a very unfashiona-

XVI. ble Virtue to offer our Advice to any body, or to  
 endeavour to make Men sensible of their Errors. But it is no more than our Religion requires of us; and whenever there is a struggle between Virtue and good Manners, every body knows which ought to prevail. It is a Happiness, indeed, to be Master of so much Address and Good-breeding, as to do our Duty without giving offence. But our Duty must be done, whatever Reception it may meet with: Nor is any Man, who has proper Opportunities for so doing, exempted from the great Work of Reformation. There is indeed an Order of Men, who are peculiarly set apart for this Purpose; and who lie under the strictest Obligations to execute their Commission faithfully: But this is no Excuse to private Christians, who are all obliged, in their respective Stations, to labour both for the Reformation of Sinners, and the Conversion of Unbelievers. *When thou art converted, strengthen thy Brethren,* was a Precept given to St. Peter only, but extending to all Christians in the World. It is a Duty founded in the Nature and Reason of the thing, it being impossible there should be a Sense of Religion in the Heart, but it will break out in suitable Demonstrations. *For out of the abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh; and the Mouth of the Righteous therefore is exercised in Wisdom, and his Tongue will be talking of Judgment.*

It is possible indeed, for an injudicious Zeal to transport us beyond the Bounds of this Duty. We may exert it at such improper Seasons, in so rude and indecent a Manner, or upon Subjects so trifling and unnecessary, as may do the Patient more Harm than Good. To enter into Disputes about little Niceties and Distinctions, which have no Influence upon



on the Salvation of our Souls, may fill Men with a thousand needless Scruples, which tend only to disturb their Consciences. To admonish a Man of his Duty, either in the Presence of others, or while he is under the Transport of an unruly Passion, can never have a good Effect. The former will be interpreted as a Design to expose him, and must needs meet with a suitable Return: The latter is like pouring Oil upon a Fire. We must wait for an Intermision or Abatement of the Fever, before we can apply our Medicine: Anger being an invincible Obstruction, even to the calmest and most gentle Reproof, *like the deaf Adder, that stoppeth her ears, and refuseth to hear the voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely.* But to return any sharp or opprobrious Language, to mix Anger and Invectives with our Admonitions, to be transported with the same violent Emotions ourselves, which render our Neighbour incapable of Advice, is a worse and more dangerous Miscarriage. The Person who is thus admonished, cannot help observing, that we are not concerned for him but for ourselves. We shall be thought to have been acted by Pride and Vanity, and to have sought Occasion, from his Error or Miscarriage, to triumph in the Superiority of our own Virtue or Understanding. If we would do this Work successfully, we must go about it in another Manner: In the Hours of Privacy and Retirement, when the Heart is disengaged from Passion, and when there can be no Suspicion of our designing any thing but our Neighbour's Benefit and Advantage: And even then it must be done gently and tenderly; it must *come down like the rain into a fleece of Wool, even as the drops that water the Earth.* With these Cautions we may go on and prosper, and be intitled to a Reward at that Day, *when those who have*

SERM. have brought many to Righteousness, shall begin to shine  
 XVI. out like the Stars for ever and ever.

Thus much for the Method of admonishing our Neighbours, and reclaiming them from their sinful Courses. But if we have a mind to reform their Faith too, we must take with us the *second* thing observable in the Character of St. Philip, I mean, his Method of convincing *Nathaniel*, by inviting him to come and see.

Sight is the most noble of all the Senses, the least liable to be abused or imposed upon. For which reason it is by a Metaphor applied to the Understanding; and a Man is said to see the truth of a Proposition, when it is demonstrated to him by the deductions of his Reason. In this sense it was meant by St. Philip, who did not invite *Nathaniel* to see the Person of our Saviour only, but to see the truth of his own Assertion; to see whether the Person he recommended as the *Messiah*, were in truth the *Messiah* or no. In making this Judgment, he was at liberty to use all his Senses, and to exercise his Reason to the full. And accordingly his Conversion was effected, not by the Sight of our Saviour only, but by the Words which he heard him utter. *Jesus*, upon his first appearing, discovered to him the very Secrets of his Heart, to which none but God and his own Soul were Witnesses. This was what moved him to cry out as he did, in a Transport of Astonishment and Joy, *Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel*.

You see then, St. Philip's Method of Persuasion was an Appeal to the Evidence of Reason, which is indeed the only Foundation upon which Faith can securely stand. But the Wisdom of some Reformers has introduc'd a new Method of Conviction, by applying

plying to the Sense of Feeling only. Racks and SERM.  
Gibbets have been substituted in the room of Syllo- XVI.  
gisms, and esteemed most effectual Arguments to con-  
vince stubborn and unrelenting Sinners. Heresy,  
they thought, was so obstinate a Distemper, that it  
would yield to nothing but Cauteries and Incisions;  
and whatever Symptoms the Disease appeared with, it  
was their constant Method to scorch and scarify. But  
after all, *these wholesome Severities* never met with the  
intended Effect: The Patients died under the Opera-  
tion, but the Infection gathered Strength. The Re-  
ligion which they designed to extirpate, grew daily  
more prevalent than ever, insomuch that it became a  
Proverb among the Sufferers, *that the blood of the  
Martyrs was the seed of the Church*. And it is no  
Wonder it should have this Effect. The Number of  
Converts could not but increase, while one side shew-  
ed so much Faith and Constancy, and the other so  
little Charity. Men will not be beat out of their Opi-  
nions, while they are assaulted with Rage and Cruel-  
ty from without, and supported by Sincerity from  
within. Hardship and Oppression, though it may  
tempt Men to conceal their Principles, will never  
enlighten their Understandings; and whatever Me-  
thods may have been attempted to repair the Weak-  
ness of the natural Eyesight, it was never known that  
the intellectual Vision was cleared up by the Effusion  
of Blood, or the sovereign Remedy of Starving. For  
this reason there was another Expedient contriv'd, as  
unnatural and preposterous as the former. Because  
People could not be prevailed on to see just as their  
Teachers would have them, it was agreed to keep  
them utterly in Darkness. An Artifice never prac-  
tised with Success, till it was introduced by the  
Church of Rome. There was once indeed a capri-  
cious

SERM. cious Philosopher, who put out his own Eyes to give  
 XVI. his Reason the fairer Play : But it was a wilder Pro-  
 ject, to extinguish the Light of Reason, in order to  
 make way for Religion. That Church indeed, as  
 she has very good Reason, appears to be a great Enemy to Light. For which end, she very prudently  
 resolves to persuade her Children to shut their Eyes. If they will but gratify her in this reasonable Request, she promises to make them ample Satisfaction by the Assistance of an Infallible Guide, who shall, to all intents and purposes, as effectually secure them against Error, as if they enjoyed their Eye-sight. By this means they will be *one Fold under one Shepherd*, free from those Jealousies and Animosities which rend and divide the Church ; and, which is a greater and more invaluable Privilege, they will be eased of the intolerable burden of Thinking. Besides this, they will be delivered from all Doubts and Perplexities which disturb the Minds of Hereticks ; and instead of working out their Salvation with fear and trembling, may go on securely in the way to Heaven, under his auspicious Influence and Direction. Especially if they will but exchange their earthly Treasures for the sacred Merchandise of Pardons, and Indulgences, and fill the Church's Coffers by their Repentance. It is no wonder that such Promises as these should, upon weak Minds, have a wonderful Effect. But because there are some wilful People that think it a Punishment to shut their Eyes, she has contrived a Method to gratify them too, by diverting their Attention from the solid duties of Religion, and fixing it upon Pomp and Shew. What else is the Meaning of those grand Parades and Processions, those formal and superstitious Observances, those gaudy Ceremonies, those solemn Fopperies, which  
 make



make up the greatest Part of her Worship? In this **SERM.** Sense, the Church of Rome may boast with great **XVI.** truth, that she invites her Votaries to come and see.  But alas! this is a slender Recompence for that total Blindness which in the mean time overspreads their Understandings, keeping them Slaves and Bigots to the most senseless set of Doctrines that can be obtruded upon any People in the World. In the mean time, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them, it is by her Care withdrawn from their Eyes. *That word, which should be a Lamp unto their feet, and a Light to their paths,* is removed from publick View, into the Cells and Cloisters of the Learned, who are too wise, it seems, to make a proper use of it: So that the vulgar are irrecoverably tied down to their Errors, and destitute of all Methods of Conviction.

Such was the State of this sinful Nation, *till the Spirit of God began to move upon our Hearts,* and the Voice of Reformation, *like that of the creating Power,* founded through these Regions of Darkness, *Let there be Light, and there was Light.* Blessed be God, that this Happiness is still continued to us; that we are allowed the free Exercise of our Reason, and have access to the word of God, *like Israel, who had light in their Dwellings,* while all Egypt was over-cast with darkness. How much reason have we to look up with gratitude to the great Author of this blessed Change! How much reason to guard against the designs of our Enemies, who would fain reduce us into that State of Servitude, from which we have been so wonderfully delivered! And how much reason to value those sacred Writings, which first rescued us from Superstition and Ignorance, and will still preserve us, if we are not wanting to ourselves, from the  
Delusion

SERM. Delusion of Satan, and from the Artifices of designing Men! God grant that we may consider them as we ought, and apply them to their proper use, that they may lead us in this World into the Knowledge of his Truth, and in the World to come unto everlasting Life.

*Now to God the Father, &c.*





A

## S E R M O N

Preached before the

K I N G.

MATT. vi. 9.

*Our Father which art in Heaven.*

**T**HE Duty of making our Requests to SERM.  
 God, with a proper Sense of our De- XVII.  
 pendence on him, is a matter of such  
 infinite moment and concern to us,  
 that it can never be too frequently  
 considered. And these Words, being well known  
 to be the Entrance, or Introduction to that excellent  
 Form of Prayer, which our Saviour compos'd for  
 the Use of his Disciples, and in them for the whole  
 Christian Church, may be supposed to convey to us  
 such an Idea of the supreme Being, as it is fit we  
 should entertain, when we approach the Throne of  
 Grace, to make our Prayers and Supplications to him.

And doubtless, whatever Notions are fit to be  
 entertained, either of the Nature or Attributes of  
 God, or of the Relation which he bears to us, when

we

SERM. we are actually employed, by the Direction of our  
 XVII. Lord, in paying Worship and Adoration to him; the  
 same it is very proper to preserve in our Minds, as  
 much as possible, at all Times and Places; not only  
 to keep us constantly and habitually prepared for  
 the exercise of this necessary Duty, but also to dis-  
 pose us to the Practice of *all* Duties, to which a  
 right Apprehension of God's Nature and our own  
 is of all things the most likely to conduce.

Since therefore the great Author and Preserver of  
 our Being is represented in my Text under the  
 Character of a Father, and particularly distinguished  
 from our earthly Parents, by his Residence or Abode  
 in Heaven; it may be worth while to consider the  
 true import of the Words, and what we are to un-  
 derstand, when we address ourselves to God in this  
 Form, which our Lord has taught us,

And, *First*, By the Title or Character of Father,  
 is represented the Relation between God and us, as  
 he gave us our Life and Being. It was he that  
 formed our first Parent *Adam*, and *breathed into his*  
*nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living*  
*Soul*: And it was he, that established that wonderful  
 Order, by which a successive Race of Men is perpe-  
 tually arising, and shall continue so to do, to the  
 end of the World, when Life shall be *swallowed up*  
*in Immortality*. The Parents we have had according  
 to the Flesh were but Instruments or Means in the  
 Hands of his Providence, to bring about his most  
 gracious Purposes. It was his Goodness that willed  
 it, his Wisdom that contrived it; and it is by virtue  
 of his absolute and supreme Dominion, that the  
 whole Race is not utterly extinct. And in this Sense,  
 as he gave Being to the Species at first, and con-  
 tinues at all times to give Life to the Individual,



not only we Christians, but Mankind in general, SERM.  
XVII.  
may very properly call God their Father.

But, *Secondly*, There is another Sense, wherein *Christians* are entitled through the wonderful Goodness and Condescension of God, more peculiarly to call *Him* their Father; inasmuch as having forfeited their *Relation* to him by being wicked and disobedient Children, they were called again on Condition of Amendment, to be *his Children by Adoption and Grace*; whereby they are assured, by God's special Promise, of many Privileges they had lost before, and are admitted to a nearer and more intimate Relation to the great Fountain of their Life and Being.

This is indeed the only Scripture-Sense, in which Christians are called *the Sons of God*: The natural Relation between God and us being there supposed to be quite cancell'd and destroyed, and a new one introduced, not grafted on the old, but independent and exclusive of it. The natural Man is supposed to have been dead, and a new Creature to be substituted in his room: The Change which is wrought by Baptism on his Heart is called *a new Birth unto Righteousness*; and the Person thus entering into Covenant with God, is understood (not to be converted, reformed, or altered, but) to be regenerate, or born again. And from hence came that Notion which obtained once among Christians, that Persons baptized were so divested of themselves, that they lost all distinctions of Blood and Family, and for the future had no other Relation to each other, than as they were knit together and united in Christ.

But however this be, it is very plain from Scripture, that by virtue of this mystical or figurative Death, by which *the old Man is crucified with his Affections*

SERM. *Affections and Lusts, and the new man is put on, which,*  
 XVII. *according to God, is created in Righteousness and true*

*Holiness,* we receive a new Right to call God our Father, which by Nature we could not have: And that, in such a sense, as carries with it an assurance of great Favour and Affection to us, and gives us reason to expect that as we are Sons, we shall be Heirs, *Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ.* And this is the last and most considerable kind of Relation between God and us, arising from *that Spirit of Adoption in our Hearts, whereby we cry Abba, Father.* But there is another Sense in which God may be called our Father, arising from the Experience of his Goodness to us in every Circumstance and Occurrence of our Lives. How often should we perish by our own wisest Projects, if he did not in his Mercy either frustrate and disappoint them, or turn them to our Advantage, by such means, and in such a manner, as *we* should have thought the most unlikely to succeed? How often should we sink under the weight of Evils, brought upon us by our own Faults and Follies, if we were not rescued by his fatherly Care? Nay how should we subsist or preserve our Beings, if his Bounty did not constantly relieve our Wants, *giving us rain from Heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with Food and Gladness.* The Lines and Marks of God's general Providence are very visible in the great Book of Nature, from which it appears, that *he is loving unto all, and that his mercy is over all his works.* Besides these; many Instances of a more immediate Providence, aiding and assisting us in every action of our Lives, we must be very inattentive, if we have not observed, and very unthankful, if we forget. He therefore

who

who thus governs and directs our Actions, who pro-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
 tects our Persons, who supplies our Wants, who <sup>XVII.</sup>  
 preserves our Being, who promotes our Happiness   
 by ways and means unknown to us, may very  
 properly be styled a Father; in like manner as we  
 give the same Title to Men, when in compliance  
 with the dictates of Humanity and Compassion, they  
 are forward to promote the Happiness of others;  
 such Men we are apt to say, have been Fathers  
 to us, inasmuch as they have treated us with the  
 same Tenderness and Affection, as a dutiful, and  
 obedient, and deserving Child might expect from  
 an indulgent Parent. When Actions like these are  
 not limited and confined to the Advantage of any  
*single* Person, but are of a general and *publick* Na-  
 ture, extending to the Benefit of a whole *Community*,  
 and calculated for the Relief of Multitudes: The  
 Person who thus acts in an elevated Station,  
 distributing liberally God's Blessings among his Fel-  
 low-Creatures, is by the consenting Testimonies of  
 all grateful Hearts, for the same Reason, called  
*The Father of his Country*. Much more may we call  
 him, who is the Giver of these Gifts, who first bestows  
 the Power, and then the Will to do good, on such  
 his Representatives on Earth, much more may we  
 call him our Father. But,

*Thirdly*, When therefore, in obedience to our  
 Lord's Commands, we put up our Petitions to  
 Almighty God in this excellent Form of Prayer, it  
 will behove us in our private Devotions at least, in  
 the exercise of which we may take our own time,  
 and are therefore at liberty to dwell as long as we  
 please on any one or more parts of the Prayer; it  
 it will behove us, I say, in our private Devotions,  
 as often as we address ourselves to Almighty God by  
 the

SERM. the Title and Character of Father, to consider him  
 XVII. in these several Views. *First*, as he created us.  
 ~~~~~ *Secondly*, as he preserves us. And, *Thirdly*, as he  
 has adopted us for Sons. With these considerations the very use of the word will become an act of Praise and Thanksgiving, not a Title only to denote that Being, to whom we offer up our Prayer, but the testimony or acknowledgment of grateful Hearts, that are sensible of God's mercy to us, in giving us our Being, in protecting us from danger, and in calling us to the Adoption of Sons. And indeed it is impossible in our Privacy and Retirement, to think on these things with any great attention, but the Heart will melt and overflow with Gratitude to so amiable and kind a Being, who called us out of nothing to the exercise of Reason, to the enjoyment of those Blessings, which he pours out about us, and above all to the Contemplation of his own Nature and Attributes, on which there is room to be perpetually employed in new acts of Delight and Wonder: Who preserves us in this State through the greatness of his Mercy, notwithstanding our endeavours to provoke his Vengeance by our wilful disobedience to him: Nay, who rescues us from this state of Disobedience itself, *by that Spirit of Adoption and Grace*, by which *we are renewed and made like unto him*, and prepared by a conformity to his Nature here, for the enjoyment of his Presence hereafter. These are surely such inestimable Benefits, such Instances of his Goodness and Condescension to us, that we must needs have very cold and frozen Hearts, if we are not affected with the highest Sense of Gratitude, when we consider for what Reasons, and in what Sense it is, that we are allowed to call God our Father.

But

But it is not by the Character of a Father only, SERM. XVII.
 but of a Father who resides in Heaven, that we are
 taught to offer up our requests to God by the direc-
 tion of our blessed Saviour: The place of his Resi-
 dence is pointed out to our view, to put us in mind
 of his infinite Perfections, and to shew us, that *as the
 Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are his thoughts
 higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways.*

There is scarce any Excellence or Perfection of
 this nature, that will not force itself on our notice,
 when we consider him in full Majesty, thus seated
 and enthroned in Heaven: Or rather when we con-
 sider him in the Immenfity of his Nature, circum-
 scribed by no Bounds or Limits, but filling the Hea-
 vens as well as the Earth, and providing for the
 Support of both. What an Idea may we conceive
 of the Greatness of that Being, *whom even the Hea-
 ven, and the Heaven of Heavens is not able to contain!*
 What an Idea of his Wisdom and Power must we
 have, when we consider him as present in all parts
 of his Creation, surveying at one view the most
 distant places; and though *he is in his holy temple,
 though his throne is in heaven, yet with his eyes behold-
 ing, and with his eyelids trying the children of men!*
 And again, what an Idea of his Goodness to us
 men, who *though he hath his dwelling so high, yet hum-
 bleth himself to behold the things that are in Heaven
 and Earth!* As therefore the Appellation or Name
 of Father may in some sort be understood (as was
 said before) to be a proper declaration of our Gra-
 titude to God, for the mercies by him vouchsafed
 to us, so the Epithet of *heavenly*, or *which art in
 Heaven*, is a very proper Introduction to that Wor-
 ship and Adoration, which is paid to him in those
 words which follow, and both together thus opened
 and

SERM. and explained, may furnish us with two useful
XVII. Lessons.

W One is, that both this and all our other Prayers, which we presume to offer up to God, should be offered with a religious Awe, suitable to the Greatness and Majesty of God, and our own Meanness and Unworthiness to approach him. Thinkest thou, says God to the over-weening Jew, who trusted in his vain Oblations, *Thinkest thou that I will eat Bulls flesh, and drink the blood of Goats? Offer unto God Thanksgiving.* In like manner might he say to the over-weening Christian, who relies on the performance of this better Sacrifice, *Thinkest thou that I am pleased with thy proud Submission, thy presumptuous Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving, as a suitable Return, a just Equivalent, a full Requital of my Favours to thee? Offer unto God an humble spirit.* Thus might our Father, which is in Heaven, expostulate with us poor Sinners upon Earth, if we presumed to lay a stress upon Praise and Thanksgiving, the most disinterested of all Offerings we can make. Much less may we set a value on our Prayers and Supplications, our Repentance for Sins, our Desire of Forgiveness, or any thing else which implies that we are indigent and needy, distressed and afflicted Beings. These things are all meant for our own Benefit and Advantage; nor can we ever assume any Merit to ourselves, because we have been so wise and so true to our own Interest, as to apply to God for the Relief of a Want, the Removal of an Evil, or the Attainment of some future Blessing. In this case therefore, if we come before the Lord with *thousands of Prayers, and with ten thousand Rivers of Tears*, we may indeed through his Mercy be profitable to ourselves, but to him we are unprofitable

fitable Servants. Nothing we can do, can either SERM.
promote or disturb, diminish or increase his Happi- XVII.
ness. It redounds not to his Profit, that we are du-
tiful and obedient, nor to his Honour, that we as-
cribe Glory to him : Nor is he otherwise pleased
with any Act of ours, than as it is conformable to
the Law of Nature or Reason, or to some other In-
junction, which for our sakes he has prescribed
to us.

Since therefore it is neither Profit nor Pleasure to
the Almighty, that we pay Worship and Adoration
to him ; since it is wholly for our Good, that he
requires us to perform it, and since ours will be
the Reward for doing it ; let us consider, when we
offer to make our Prayers to him, in whose Presence
we are presuming to appear : Let us remember, *he*
is our Father ; a most endearing Title ; but a Title,
which carries Reverence and Respect ; a Title which
should deter us from making any disrespectful, indecent
or unpremeditated Request. Let us consider also, that
he is no earthly Parent, that he is not subject to the
Prejudices and Errors of an ignorant and partial Fond-
ness, but sees us as we are, whatever Artifice we
may use, whatever Colours and Disguises we may
wear : That as he is too *wise* not to see our Guilt,
so is he also of *purser Eyes than to behold it* ; and will
have no regard to the Requests of those who do not
labour to approve themselves his genuine Offspring,
by resembling him in the Purity of his Nature. Let
it be remembred also, that though he, in his Good-
ness, is pleased to admit us, though far unworthy,
to the Privileges and Name of Sons, we are no more
than his Creatures still : The same distance of Na-
ture there is still between us : We are the work of
his hands, as much inferior to him, nay infinitely

SERM. more, than the most despicable part of the brute or
 XVII. the inanimate Creation is inferior to the highest of
 those exalted Spirits, that continually *incompass the throne of God*, whose Excellence it is, that they are able without ceasing, and whose Happiness it is, that they are admitted without measure to enjoy the blessed Vision of their great Creator, and to be perpetually employ'd in the highest Offices of Devotion, and the highest Ecstasies of Love and Wonder. *Let the Potsherd therefore strive with the Potsherds of the Earth:* Let us vie with each other in those Acts of Virtue, which tend to raise and refine our Nature: But let us all, when we come into the Presence of God, bring with us the most submissive Reverence: Let us remember the Distance between *him* and *us*; and let us always esteem it a high Privilege and Honour, that we are allowed to approach the throne of Grace, and offer up our Supplications there; that he has declared he is well pleased with our Praise and Thanksgiving, and that he will not reject our Prayers.

Secondly, Therefore, notwithstanding our meanness, notwithstanding our unworthiness to receive Favours from him, let us approach him with the confidence of Sons, in full assurance that our Prayers will be heard, and our Requests, if expedient, granted. What *Man is there of you*, says our blessed Saviour, *who if his Son ask bread, will he give him a stone, or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?* There is something in the very Name and Relation of Father, which implies a Proneness or Readiness to give; a Desire to administer to the Wants of his Children, and to gratify them in all reasonable Requests; and much more may we expect this from *our Father which is in Heaven*, than we can expect it from any earthly Parent;

rent; because one of the Reasons why we call him Fa-SERM.
ther, is the Experience of his Bounty to us: We have XVII.
ever found him ready, unask'd and unthought of, to
relieve us in all Difficulties and Wants. This therefore
we may consider, with great Gratitude and Respect,
as an earnest of his future Favours, especially since he
has been pleas'd to encourage us with a Promise, that
if we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find; if
we knock, it shall be opened unto us. But we may further
observe from the Epithet of *Heavenly*, by which he
is distinguished from our earthly Parents, that we
may safely rely on his Wisdom to discern, and his
Power to supply our Wants. An earthly Parent
may perhaps be well acquainted with the real Needs
and Necessities of his Child, but may want Power
or Ability to supply them: Or again, he may be
able to supply his Wants, but may be ignorant in
what manner it may be best to do it, that it may
turn to the Child's Interest or Advantage. When
he asketh Bread, he may ignorantly give him that,
which may prove to *him* no better than a *Stone*;
when he asketh a *Fish* (such ill Judges are we of
the Issues and Events of things) he may chance to
give him that, which when he comes to use it, may
prove to be as *baneful* as a *Serpent*: But this is not
the Case of *our Father, which is in Heaven*, who not
only sees us in our present *Wants*, but likewise in all
possible *Distresses*: Who is perfectly acquainted with
the Tendencies and Effects of all that we either do
or suffer; and will not fail, if we submit to his Will
and Pleasure, and leave the Issues of things to his
unerring Wisdom, so to order and dispose them to
our Benefit and Advantage, that in the end we shall
have cause to admire his Wisdom and to praise him
for his Goodness to us; displayed sometimes by *gra-*

SERM. *tifying* our Desires, and sometimes by *disappointing*
 XVII. our Hopes, by averting those Evils which we igno-
 ~~~~~ rantly asked, or by chastening and correcting us  
 with such salutary Discipline, as, however irksome  
 and afflicting it may be to us for the present, he  
 sees to be most useful for us. And thus far we may  
 rely on God's fatherly Goodness, when we make  
 our Petitions to him.

But, lastly, it must be observed, before we part  
 with this Subject, that in all our Requests and Sup-  
 plications to God, we must have a due regard to the  
 Good of other *Men*. We must not be so narrow and  
 contracted in our Views, as to aim at nothing but  
 our own private Benefit; but must enlarge our Re-  
 quests with a truly christian Charity to the Good of  
 Mankind in general, who, as they have all one com-  
 mon Parent, one Creator and Preserver of the whole,  
 may be presumed to love as Brethren, and whose  
 Duty it is therefore to *promote* the Good of others, by  
 all Services and good Offices in their Power, of  
 which there can be none greater, than that of la-  
 bouring by our Prayers to procure God's Blessing for  
 them. We can have no Pretence to ask any thing  
 of God, if we do not truly and sincerely love him;  
 and we cannot pretend to love him truly and sincere-  
 ly, *if we do not love our Brother also*. And this is the  
 reason that the Prayer now before us, is composed  
 all along in the plural Style, teaching us that what-  
 ever we think reasonable for ourselves, we should  
 endeavour to procure likewise for our Brethren, who,  
 as they are deriyed from the same Original, and were  
 fashion'd by the same hand, in the same form, and  
 of the same matter with ourselves, are as much un-  
 der the care of his gracious Providence, and as much  
 entitled to his Love as we are.

To

To sum up all : When we enter into our Closets SERM.  
to pray (at which times this excellent Prayer of our XVII.  
Lord should never surely, if possible, be omitted) let ~  
us always endeavour to prepare our Hearts for it,  
by reflecting on God's awful Majesty, and let this dis-  
courage us from presuming to approach him without  
a Sense of our Meanness and Unworthiness to ask,  
or receive any thing from so pure a Being : But at  
the same time, let us remember, that his Mercy is  
great, that he has borne with our Frailties, and re-  
lieved our Necessities with the Kindness and Com-  
passion of a Father ; that he has admitted us to the  
Title and Privileges of Sons, and allowed us, through  
the Merits and Intercession of our Redeemer, *to come  
boldly to the throne of Grace.* For these Mercies, and  
all others that have ever been received from him,  
let our Hearts be lifted up with Gratitude, and let  
them be filled with a sense of his Excellencies and  
Perfections, which is the best way of *ascribing Glory  
to him* ; the best way to kindle such a Love to God,  
as will break out in the most diffusive Benevolence  
to Mankind ; such a Love as will give us the best  
Claim we can have, to ask any thing at the hands  
of God ; and such a Love as will dispose us, above  
all things, by his Grace, to pray for others, with  
as much Zeal as for ourselves ; and this seems to  
be the Frame and Disposition of Mind, which we all  
ought to aim at, though we cannot always have it  
when we direct our Prayers to Almighty God, in  
that short, but comprehensive and affectionate Ad-  
dress, *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

*Now to God the Father, &c.*





A

## S E R M O N

On MATT. vi. 9. *Hallowed be thy Name.*

SERM.  
XVIII.



WHEN, according to the Command of our blessed Saviour, we have directed our Prayer to the throne of Grace by that short, but comprehensive and affectionate Address, *Our Father which art in Heaven*; the next thing to be considered is the Petition in my Text; the meaning of which, though it ought to be understood, and it is to be hoped is, in some competent degree, understood by all those who are accustomed to use it in their publick as well as private Worship; yet, because it may be of use, even to those who understand it, to meditate sometimes more particularly upon the Sense of it, that they may be able to recover it with the greater readiness and ease, when they have occasion to make use of it in their Prayers, I shall at this time take upon me to explain.

And, first, by God's *Name*, which we here pray may be *hallowed*, we are to understand his most glorious Majesty; the Person, if I may so speak, of our Father which is in Heaven; as distinguished from all other



other Beings. In this Sense it is used in many Texts SERM.  
of Scripture, too tedious to be here inserted. When XVIII.  
Solomon called the new Temple which he had built, *a House built to the Name of the Lord*, it was never  
understood, that this Temple was erected in Honour of  
the word *Jehovah*, or of any other Title or Appella-  
tion whatsoever, by which the God of *Israel* was  
adored; but that it was raised for his Honour, and  
dedicated to his Service, and designed as a place of  
Worship for him. Again, when God declared, as it  
appears he did, that in this Temple he would *place his*  
*Name*, it was never understood, that the word *Jeho-*  
*vah* was either literally inscribed upon the Temple  
itself, or deposited and preserved within it, but that  
he chose this Place, in some sense or other, to be the  
Seat of his immediate Residence. In like manner,  
when we are taught, as we often are in Scripture, *to*  
*call upon the Name of the Lord*, it is not meant that  
we ought to worship him by any Name in particular,  
but only that in general we should call upon him, and  
make our Prayers and Supplications to him. *To blas-*  
*pheme the Name of God*, as the Gentiles did, taking  
Offence at the ill Lives of Christians, can signify no  
more, than in a strict Sense to speak, and in a loose  
Sense to think, or conceive in our Minds any Notion  
unworthy of him. On the other hand, *to bless*, *to*  
*love*, *to praise*, *to magnify*, *to sing praises to God's holy*  
*Name*, have no other Sense, in the Language of holy  
Writ, than to ascribe all Glory to him: The word  
*Name* being used for the thing signified by the Name;  
for the Person, or the Deity, the Majesty of God,  
including those Excellencies and Perfections of his,  
by which he is distinguished from all other Beings.

This then being settled, the next thing to be con-  
sidered, is the meaning of the word *Hallowed* in my

SERM. Text. To *hallow* or sanctify can have no other Sense,  
 XVIII. than either to consecrate or make holy any Person or  
 thing that was not in its own Nature holy; or else  
 to esteem, and treat as holy, any Person or thing  
 that is so. In the first of these Senses, it is easy to  
 see, that it cannot be understood in my Text: it be-  
 ing impossible to make God, who is the Person there  
 spoken of, to be in any respect holier than he is. The  
 peculiar Excellencies and Perfections of his Nature;  
 the incommunicable Attributes, by which he is distin-  
 guished and separated from all other Beings, are the  
 Fountain of that Holiness, which is ascribed to him,  
 and from him derived to others: nor is any thing call-  
 ed Holy in a Scripture Sense, but as it bears some re-  
 lation to him. Thus the *Jews* of old, and we Chri-  
 stians now, are said to be a holy People to the Lord.  
 And thus among Christians, some Persons are esteem-  
 ed, or should be esteemed, as I shall shew hereafter,  
 to have a greater share of Sanctity than others; in-  
 asmuch as in many Cases they represent his Person,  
 and act in his name and stead. Thus also some places  
 and times are sacred, being dedicated to his Use  
 and Service; every thing being supposed to be more  
 or less holy, as it is more or less distinguished from  
 things of the same Nature, by the relation which it  
 bears to God. God therefore being the Fountain of  
 that relative Holiness, which we ascribe to all other  
 Beings; and Holiness in him, being derived from  
 none, but founded in the greatness and excellence of  
 his Nature, which in the strictest Sense is infinite; it  
 is impossible, as I said, by any act of ours, for him  
 to be made holier than he is. To *hallow* therefore  
 in the words before us, must be understood in the  
 other Sense, as it signifies to esteem, and treat as  
 holy, any Person or thing that is so. To do this  
 with

with respect to God, is to think of him, as of a Being endued with all possible Perfections: And that too, in such an eminent and peculiar manner, that they never were or can be communicated to any Creature of the most excellent and exalted Nature. We must believe, that the Ideas we are able to form of the moral Beauties and Attributes of God, as they are no better than Copies of those Virtues and Graces which we discover in our own finite Nature, are infinitely short of those divine Perfections, as they exist and shine forth in Him. We must therefore strive to exalt our thoughts to the highest Images we can possibly frame; and confess, when we have done this, that we are as far from knowing him, as far from comprehending his mysterious Nature, as we were when we set out at first. Yet still we must go on, and esteem it our highest Privilege that we are able, at least in some competent degree, to contemplate his glorious Being; that we are not, like the brute or inanimate Creation, quite ignorant of the hand that formed us, but can consider the *Heavens as the Work of his hands, the Moon and the Stars as what he ordained*; that the *invisible things of him* are, in some measure, seen and cleared up by the things about us; that we can trace his Wisdom, his Goodness and his Power from their various and great Effects; from the Order of the World; from the Beauties of Nature; from the wonderful Events and Revolutions of things, which are continually rising and appearing to our View, and putting us in mind, if it were possible to forget it, that it was he who contrived and formed the whole, and that it is he who still rules and governs it.

From this general Notion of *hallowing the Name* of God, by conceiving in our Minds the most sublime Ideas of his most excellent and perfect Being,

SERM. and by affecting our Hearts with the most awful  
 XVIII. Sense of Respect and Veneration for him, which is  
 ~~~~~ what seems to be meant by that Precept of St. Peter,  
to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, we shall naturally be led to the exercise of those Acts, which are expressive of this inward Reverence. As it is not enough to have right Notions and Apprehensions of the Nature and Attributes of God, unless they are accompanied with such Affections of Mind, as those Notions ought properly to produce, so neither is it enough to have such Affections of Mind, if they are not testified by some outward Act. Not that there is need, by any Act of ours, or by any humble Posture of the Body, to make known unto God, who is the great Searcher of Hearts, in what manner we are affected to him. But it is the duty of us Christians, for the Good of others, by the positive Command of our blessed Lord himself, so far as we can escape the the guilt of Hypocrisy and vain Glory, to make our Virtues as conspicuous as we can: Or in his own Words, *to make our light so to shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.* Besides this, it is the Duty, as well as Happiness of man, to exercise as many Acts of Reverence as he can, to a Being of so much Majesty as God: Nor indeed can such a Reverence, as I have here supposed, subsist in the Mind without it. We find ourselves by Experience to be so frail and feeble, so immerst in Sense, and so easily withdrawn from all Objects of a spiritual Nature, that there is need of all the Arts and Advantages we can use, to keep a Sense of God's Majesty in our Hearts. Every Act of Worship tends to strengthen and confirm such a pious and religious Spirit, and every Omission of such Act impairs it: A long continuance in such Omissions

sions is an Evidence that the Principle is weak, and utterly to abstain from all Acts of Worship, is a plain Proof that it is utterly extinct. It is for this Reason, that the wise Author of our Nature has separated or set apart a certain portion of our Time, for the exercise of these spiritual Acts; and since he has been so good and so moderate in his demands, as to require but One day in Seven, it is but reasonable, that of ourselves we should make a Free-will-Offering of some lesser portion of the other Six: The frequent Repetition of these solemn Acts being, not only a Duty which we owe to God, but a Means to enable us to perform that Duty with the greater Ease and Pleasure to ourselves; in like manner, as the Practice of any manual Art does enable the Practitioner, as often as he repeats it, to perform it with more Readiness and Ease, till at last he arrives at such a Mastery in his Art, as to do it with Delight and Pleasure. Such is the Effect, which in the Nature of things we might reasonably expect from the regular Use of such solemn and religious Acts. But we are further assured by the Scripture itself, that if in this manner *we draw near unto God*, we may expect him *to draw near unto us*: That in return for our poor and imperfect Services, he will endue us with such Measures of supernatural Grace, as will enable us to do it better for the future; and he that is not sensible of this Progress of the Soul from Virtue to Virtue, from Grace to Grace, under the Influence and Aid of God's holy Spirit, has lost one of the greatest and most divine Enjoyments, that in this dark, imperfect and disconsolate State, the Soul of Man is capable of receiving.

Some Acts of Worship, to be religiously performed at regular and stated Periods, are therefore not only
the

SERM. the genuine Effects, but the best Preservatives of that
 XVIII. religious Awe, which we ought to have for the Majesty of God. But such Acts as these cannot well be performed, at least not at all times with equal Profit, without the help of some outward Sign. We may indeed sometimes, with infinite Delight, set our Thoughts a ranging in those boundless Fields of Contemplation on the Attributes of God, till they are lost and swallowed up in Wonder. And such an Act—as this, when it is a voluntary Act, performed with a fixt and deliberate Design to admire and adore the Deity, is, doubtless, in his Sight as much an Act of Worship, as when we offer up *the Sacrifice of our Lips*. But it is not every one that has this Strength of Mind. Many have no Notion of any Act of Worship, so pure, so abstracted and refined; nor can even those who have, be so sure of praising God in an acceptable and proper Manner, when they are left to the direction of their own sudden Thoughts, as they are by the help of a set Form of Words, design'd to contain and suggest to their Minds proper matter for their Praise and Worship.

As to publick Prayer, which is a kind of Worship, from which nothing but Necessity can excuse us; there could be nothing of this kind, without publick Forms, to offer up our Requests jointly to God. Words there must be, and a set Form of Words, as for many other Reasons, so particularly for this, that we may avoid all rash and inconsiderate Expressions, which an unpremeditated kind of Worship might produce.

And as for these Reasons, and some others that might be named, it is very fit and proper, and even necessary in common Cases, to make use of a set Form of Prayer, so the Use of that Form should be accom-

accompanied with such Postures as are most proper to ^{SERM.} express Reverence and Respect. In this Nation, the ^{XVIII.} highest Instances of Humility and Submission are expressed by the Act of Kneeling; which is therefore the proper Posture to be used among us, in the Exercise of these pious Acts. It is true, that this Circumstance is not necessary to be observed at all Times, and in all Cases that may happen. A Labourer at his Work, a Student in his Chair, a Traveller on the Road, a sick Man in his Bed, and, in general, whatever State or Posture we are in, in our Morning Studies, in our Evening Walks, in our Midnight Vigils, we may doubtless perform many Acts of Piety very acceptable to Almighty God; the Nature of our Condition, the Business we are about, or the sudden Turn of our Thoughts to a religious Subject, not allowing us Time or Place or Opportunity to perform it in any other Manner. But the Case is not so, at those stated Seasons, which we constantly observe, and prescribe to ourselves, for the Exercise of our daily Worship; which being more deliberate and solemn Acts, to be performed in private, at convenient Times, when we are at liberty to choose our Posture, we ought always to perform upon our Knees; because that is the Posture, which is used among us, when we come into the Presence of an earthly Prince, to testify our Duty to him. Now it is a well-known Rule in God's dealing with us, that he expects us to act in all Instances of Duty, according to those Notions and Apprehensions of things, which we ourselves are capable of entertaining. Whatever he requires, he requires at our Hands, as agreeable to our own Conceptions, though for ought we know, in many Cases, this may happen to be as different from his, as Dark-
ness

SERMON. nefs is from Light, or as our own frail and imperfect
XVIII. Being is different from his glorious Majesty.

~~~~~ Since therefore some tokens of bodily Respect, and among *us* that of Kneeling in particular is esteemed a proper Sign of our inward Reverence, it ought surely to be performed to the great Author of our Being, who is entitled to the best tokens of our Respect. It is true, he does not need such Assurances as this, nor any other Evidence of our Duty: But if this were any Reason against bodily Worship, it would be a Reason against all Worship in general, against the use of Words as well as other Signs, which nevertheless I have proved necessary to be used.

To this may be added, that this action of Kneeling, thus constantly kept up and religiously observed in our private as well as publick Prayers, must needs tend to preserve that Sense of God's Majesty, which is the Fountain of religious Worship. The preparation we make for these Acts of Duty, and the solemn manner in which they are performed, serve to keep up the distinction which is necessary to be made between Actions profane and sacred. Without this, the performance of religious Worship would in a little while become as indifferent to us, as the most ordinary and common Actions of our Lives; the sense of God's Majesty would insensibly decline, till at last we should come to be so unconcern'd about it, as to lay aside even the Times of performing this Duty, and so at last lose the whole habit of Devotion. Whereas by this Method of falling down on our Knees, whenever we perform any act of Worship, the solemnity of such Acts is effectually preserved, an awful sense of God's Majesty



jeſty is impreſſed upon our Hearts, and we can ſcarce  
offer up our Requeſts to God, without a due ſeri-  
ouſneſs and compoſure of Mind, without ſuch an  
humble and ſubmiſſive Reverence as that Poſture is  
intended to expreſs. SERM.  
XVIII.

To *hallow* or ſanctify the Name of God is there-  
fore, not only to conceive in our Minds a due Re-  
verence and Veneration for him, but alſo to declare  
and expreſs that Reverence by proper Acts of reli-  
gious Worſhip. But beſides theſe Offerings of Praise  
and Glory more immediately directed to him, there  
is alſo another way to expreſs this Reverence, by  
the regard we pay to thoſe perſons or things, which  
are dedicated to his immediate Service. Among  
theſe may be reckoned, firſt, thoſe Words or Sounds,  
which are uſed in any Language as the Name of  
God, and are thereby ſo peculiarly appropriated to  
him, that it is unlawful even to *mention* them upon  
*ſlight* occaſions, or to apply them to any other Being;  
the former of which tends to leſſen that Reverence,  
which we ſhould bear to the Name of God; and  
the latter to deſtroy that neceſſary diſtinction, which  
ſhould always be preſerved and kept up in our Minds,  
between God and all other Beings,

Another Inſtance of this kind, are thoſe times and  
places, which are ſeparated or ſet apart by God's  
own Appointment, or elſe by an Authority derived  
from him, to his own proper Uſe and Service. Of  
this kind is his Sabbath, which, if it were duly ob-  
ſerv'd and kept with as much Reverence as it ought,  
would have an Influence on the whole following  
Week, and tend to keep up at all times and places  
that awful regard for the Majeſty of God, in which  
the Life of all Piety conſiſts. Of the ſame kind is  
this Place, in which we are met together, and all  
other

SERM. other Places so consecrated and ordained for the Performance of religious Worship. These are always to be considered as appropriated to God, and to be treated therefore with a peculiar Respect. Far from this Place should be all worldly Business, all wanton Thoughts and impure Desires, all rude, indecent, and disrespectful Gestures, and all vain and unnecessary Discourse. Our Thoughts should be wholly bent and fixt on him, who is the great Object of our Praise and Worship: And all the Powers of our Souls should be summoned and employed in performing this Duty to him. If this were the case of all, who come together to these Places of religious Worship; if their Offerings were made with joint Force and Energy, what Blessings might we not expect? Our Prayers would ascend, *like an armed Host*, and as our Saviour terms it, take Heaven by Storm.

To the performance of this Duty and all others that can be named, nothing can be expected more effectually to conduce, than the reading of the holy Scriptures, which are another Instance of things which deserve our Reverence, from the relation which they bear to God. I have not room at this time to expatiate or lanch out upon the excellence of these holy Writings. Be it sufficient to observe, that they were *written by holy men* under the Influence of God's holy Spirit; that they contain the most perfect Rule both of Faith and Manners, teaching whatever we are required to believe or do for the attainment of everlasting Happiness: And therefore that the Knowledge to be gathered from them, whatever we may think now, will be found hereafter to be the best and most useful Knowledge.

In

In these Writings are ordained another sort of **SERM.** things, to be treated with a peculiar Reverence, I **XVIII.** mean the Sacraments, which were instituted by Christ himself, *as a means* to confer Grace upon the Persons who receive them, *and a pledge to assure* them of it. These, as they were thus instituted and ordained by Christ, and are besides the most solemn and religious Acts, by which we can have any Intercourse with God, should be treated with proper decency and respect: That of Baptism, by considering it as the Badge of our Profession, as the Seal of that Covenant between God and us, by which we are entitled, through the Merits of our Redeemer, *to the privileges and rights of Sons*: And that of the Lord's Supper, by remembering with Gratitude the Benefits thus purchased for us; by frequenting it constantly, receiving it reverently, and by keeping those Vows and Resolutions of Amendment, which we are required at those times to make.

To these, in the last place, we may add the Persons of those who are appointed to administer these holy Sacraments, to interpret God's Word, and dispense his Grace by such Offices as the Church directs: Not in such a general and unlimited Sense, that the Salvation of Mens Souls can any way depend on their absolute Will and Pleasure, but as the means or instruments, which as often as they can be had, it has pleased God to appoint, for the regular conveyance of these Blessings to their Christian Brethren. Now the Persons of these Men should therefore be esteemed holy, and a proper respect is therefore to be paid to them, because they are separated and set apart, however unworthy, to the sole use and service of God. This is the strict and proper

SERM. proper Sense, in which every thing is accounted  
 XVIII. holy : Nor is it any bar to this holiness of theirs, that  
 ~~~~~ their Lives are unsanctified and unclean. A Vessel  
 that has been dedicated to the Service of God,
 though defiled and polluted by sacrilegious hands,
 is nevertheless a holy Vessel to the Lord. And the
 Reason is plain, because the Sanctity or Holiness,
 that is ascribed to all Beings, except God, is not a
 natural and inherent, but a derivative Holiness : It
 does not arise from any Purity of Nature, but merely
 from the Relation which that Being bears to him,
who is perfect Holiness. There is therefore a certain
 decency of Behaviour to be observed to all those,
 who are employed in this important Trust, though,
 not for their own sake, but God's : And ill does it
 become those, who have a regard to God's Glory,
 to treat with Scorn, as too many do, an Order of
 God's own appointing, and to make that the Object
 of Contempt and Derision, which is a Title of the
 highest Honour and Respect.

Upon the whole then, as often as these Words are
 used, we are first to understand them as an Act of
 Praise; as a dutiful Acknowledgment, that God
 ought to be adored and glorified by all his Creatures ;
 that *his Name is worthy to be praised and had in*
Honour, and that it is the duty of all those, who
 are capable of performing it, to ascribe to him all
 Glory and Worship. Secondly, It is a Petition or
 Request to God, that we and all others may be
 enabled to perform it in such a manner as will be
 acceptable to him : That we may preserve in our
 Minds an habitual Sense of his infinite and most ado-
 rable Perfections ; that this Sense may be expressed
 by proper acts of Worship, particularly by Medita-
 tion

tion and Prayer, which Prayer should be conceived SERM.
in a set Form of Words, and delivered in the most XVIII.
humble Posture: That he may be pleased to preserve 
us in this profligate Age, from that Spirit of Pro-
faneness which is gone out among us, destroying all
distinctions between sacred and profane, and tempt-
ing us to treat every thing that is dedicated to *him*, in
the most irreverent and contumelious manner: Particu-
larly that he may enable us by the Assistance of his
Grace, to preserve an awful Regard to his holy
Name, how much soever we hear it vilified and
blasphemed: To his Sabbath, however it is now
prostituted and profaned by the management of
our secular concerns, or by the no more innocent,
though less censured custom of employing it in idle
and impertinent Visits, and thereby spending it in
vain and unprofitable, if not wicked and unchari-
table Discourse: To his Temple, the Place where
he has set his Name, however it is unhallowed
and defiled by the wilful Inattention and Indevotion
of some, who appear to come thither with very
different Views from the End and Design for which
it was erected, and devoted to the Name of God:
To the Word of God, however rudely handled by
ludicrous and licentious Pens: To the Sacraments
ordained by Christ himself, however deserted and
disused by some, and however profaned by others:
And to the Persons of his Ministers, appointed
by his Word, to act in his name and stead,
however unworthy of that honourable distinction,
however contemned, traduced and scorned by in-
considerate and uncharitable men. In one word, it
is a Petition, that we may all be endued with such
a competent measure of God's special Grace, that

we

SERM. we may live like men who have a constant Sense
 XVIII. of a superior Being presiding over them, who de-
 serves all the tenders of duty we can make,
 and whom therefore let us worship by the Re-
 verence of our Hearts, by the Acknowledgments
 of our Lips, and above all by the Obedience
 and Purity of our Lives, both now and for ever
 more.

Now to God, &c.





A

S E R M O N

On MATT. vi. 10. *Thy Kingdom come.*

HIS short Petition, and the next **SERM.**
 which follows, *that the Will of God* **XIX.**
may be done on Earth, in like manner
as it is done in Heaven, are designed
 to carry on that Act of Worship,
 which was begun in the foregoing
 Words; where, as soon as we have ascribed all
 Praise and Glory to *our Father which is in Heaven,* we
 proceed to pray, that that Glory may be display'd by
 the coming of his Kingdom, and by the obedience
 of all rational or intelligent Creatures, those on
 Earth as well as those in Heaven. The first of these,
 namely the Coming of his Kingdom, will at this
 time be the Subject of my Discourse; in which I
 shall enquire.

I. What is meant by the word Kingdom, and

II. What is meant by its coming. After which
 I shall conclude with some practical Observations,
 which my Subject seems naturally to suggest.

I. The Kingdom of God, in the Language of
 holy Writ, is understood in very different Senses.
 Sometimes it is spoken of that absolute Dominion,
 which

SERM. which is exercised by God over the Works of his
 XIX. hands, as the great Author and Sovereign of the
 whole; agreeable to which are those words of the
 Psalmist, *The Lord hath prepared his Throne in Heaven;*
his Kingdom ruleth over all. Sometimes it is taken in
 a more limited sense, as importing his particular
 Providence over men, distinguished from the rest of
 their Fellow-Creatures upon Earth, by the Principle
 of Reason which he has given them: In which
 sense it is said by the same holy Writer, *The Kingdom*
is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the People.
 But in neither of these senses, however common in
 holy Writ, is the Word *Kingdom* to be understood in
 my Text. For in both these senses it is already
 come, and has been from the Creation of the World.
God is our King of old, says David, the Lord is King
for ever and ever. There never was a time when his
 Power was less absolute, nor can it ever be more ab-
 solute than it is, nor can we ever pray that *this*
Kingdom of his may come, in any other sense, than
 to testify our Submission to his sovereign Will and
 Pleasure; to declare that we are content with his
 Dispensations to us, well satisfied with the Reasona-
 bleness and Equity of his Proceedings, and willing
 to confess with the most thankful hearts, *that the*
Sceptre of his Kingdom is a right Sceptre. This indeed
 it is our duty to do; but this is not what is meant
 in my Text; for this would confound it with the
 following Petition: Whereas in such a short and com-
 prehensive Form, it cannot be supposed, that the
 same thing should be asked twice, or made the Sub-
 ject of any two Petitions.

By the Kingdom of God, in the words now to
 be considered, we are therefore to understand
 that spiritual Kingdom, which is no where men-
 tioned

tioned as actually subsisting, till the times of the Gospel Covenant, but is often mentioned there under various Names, and considered in very different views; sometimes it is called *the Kingdom of Heaven*, sometimes *the Kingdom of God*, and sometimes *the Kingdom of Christ*; sometimes it is considered as a *State of Grace*, and sometimes as a *State of Glory*; under all which Titles, and in both which views, there is no more than one thing intended, namely that spiritual and invisible Kingdom of the Messiah, which was foretold by the Prophets, expected by the *Jews*, and is believed by us Christians to have actually commenced at the time of our blessed Lord's Ascension; though it is not yet become perfect and complete, nor shall be till the end of all things, when *Christ shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God even the Father, that God may be all in all*. In the mean time he has an absolute and unlimited Dominion over all things both in Heaven and Earth, *God having highly exalted him, and given him a Name above every Name, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth, and that every Tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*. In this infinitely glorious and exalted State, he is represented as *sitting at the right hand of God, far above all Principality and Power, and Might and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come*. From hence too he is represented, as dispensing those Favours and pouring down those Gifts and Graces of his holy Spirit, which are necessary for his Kingdom upon Earth; giving Laws to those who submit to his Jurisdiction, enforcing those Laws by Rewards and Punishments, and protecting his Subjects from the

SERM. the Invasion of their Enemies, by the Influence of
 XIX. his holy Spirit. These are the several Acts of Christ's
 ~~~~~ regal Office, which it may be worth while more particularly to consider, that we may from thence form a Judgment of the Nature of that Kingdom, which is so often made the Subject of our Prayers.

I. The first act of Royalty which is exercised by Christ, is the giving or prescribing Laws. As God has made Laws for Mankind in general, by implanting in our Nature such a Sense of Good and Evil, as may enable us in some sort to understand his Will, and to regulate our Actions by it; so has Christ, by refining on this ancient Law, by enforcing its Precepts, by clearing up its Doubts, by adding what was wanting to make it perfect and complete, composed a new set of Laws for the Government of his Kingdom, which, though not inconsistent with the Law of Nature or Reason, do nevertheless subsist by a distinct Authority, and are received as Laws by the Subjects of his Kingdom, in Obedience to their Lord's Commands. These Laws are reducible to two general Heads, that is to say, Repentance and Faith. The latter of which, in the Christian Sense, was never made a Law, or required as a Duty, till the Coming of our Saviour Christ; and the former, considered as a *Death unto Sin, and a new Birth to a Life of Righteousness*, is a Notion unknown to all Religions, except the Christian, from which alone it derives its Being. Since therefore no Person can have a Right to impose Laws, or to exact any obedience from others, but by virtue of some Authority over them; and since the Right of Kings to impose Laws upon their Subjects (though not without their own Consent) is the highest Notion of such Authority upon Earth; the prescribing these Laws, and exacting this obedience from all Persons, to whom

whom the Gospel is preached, may be considered as SERM.  
 one Act of Christ's Regal Office, extending indeed XIX.  
 to all People in the World, but peculiarly exercised  
 over those, who are admitted to a nearer Interest in  
 this Kingdom of Grace.

II. But, *Secondly*, because it is of little use to enact wholesome Laws, unless they are enforced by proper Sanctions, unless suitable Rewards are annexed to the Observance, and Penalties to the Violation of them; and because this also is the Office of a King, to see that they are executed in the most effectual Manner to promote the true Interest of his People; another Instance therefore of Christ's regal Power, is the executing these Laws, and enforcing our Obedience by the Motives of Rewards and Punishments. The former of which are set forth in the Gospel in such amiable and inviting Colours, and the latter denounced with so much Terror to the Disobedient, that if we do not comply with the Terms proposed to us, we shall be utterly without Excuse. Our Hopes and Fears are so thoroughly alarm'd, by all that can be expected to have an Influence upon either, that whenever we see Men, who profess themselves Christians, live dissolute Lives, and discover by their Actions, that these Motives have no Influence upon their Hearts, there is great Reason to suspect their Faith: it being scarce possible that those, who are in truth persuaded, that the Fruits of Righteousness are so great and glorious, and the Wages of Sin so exceeding grievous, as in the Gospel they are described to be, should, notwithstanding this, make it evidently appear, that they have no regard for either. But whatever we may think, or however we may act, God's Laws will be executed at last. If he is not glorified by our Obedience here, he will be by our

SERM. Punishment hereafter. His Justice will be displayed,

XIX. and his Honour vindicated in the presence of Men and Angels. That Patience and Forbearance, which the Wicked now abuse, shall be kindled into Wrath and Vengeance; and the Sufferings of the Righteous, *which endure but for a moment, shall work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*

Now the Person, who is to execute this high Commission of dispensing Rewards and Punishments, is, according to the Scriptures, Christ our Lord, to whom it is there said, *all Judgment is committed, and all Power both in Heaven and Earth;* and whose final coming to judge the World, is accordingly described with the highest marks of Royalty, with some allusion to the Magnificence of earthly Princes, when they sit in Judgment, or appear among their Subjects to execute the highest Offices of State. This therefore is the second branch of Christ's regal Office, by which he is impowered *to judge among the People*, to call his Subjects to account for their Behaviour, and to reward them according to their Deserts. But

III. Because this Life is a State of trial and probation, and the Day of Judgment is put off, till we have finished our Course, and are all met together on the other side of the Grave; and because in the mean time we have need of great Succours against the assaults of our spiritual Enemies, another Instance of Christ's regal Power consists in the defence and protection of his Subjects, in all Difficulties and Dangers that may arise. The end of all Government is the People's Good, who therefore submit to the Authority of a King, because by him they are preserved from Danger: And the more vigilant and active, the more able their Prince is to avenge their Quarrels, to subdue their Enemies, to guard them against Injuries  
and



and Assaults from others, the more secure is he always SERM.  
of their Duty and Respect. Accordingly if we look XIX.  
back into the Registers of Time, and search the ~  
Histories of Kings and Kingdoms, we shall find that  
those Princes have been most honoured and esteemed,  
who have either ruled their Subjects in Peace and  
Safety, or else have turned their Arms upon the Ene-  
mies of their Country, and signalized their Names  
in After-Ages by a long Series of Victories and Tri-  
umphs. Had the Kingdom of the Messiah been a  
Kingdom of this World, as it was expected by the  
*Jews* to be, none had been more able to wage War  
successfully, and to have enlarged *his dominion from*  
*one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world's*  
*end.* He that could have commanded more Legions  
of Angels, than the *Romans* had of Soldiers to carry  
on their Conquests, could literally have fulfilled the  
Predictions of the Prophets, *bruising his enemies with*  
*a rod of iron, and breaking them in pieces like a Potter's*  
*vessel.* But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal:  
*We wrestle not,* says the Apostle, *against flesh and blood,*  
*but against principalities, against powers, against the*  
*rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual*  
*wickedness in high places.* These are the Enemies we  
have to deal with. The aids and succours which our  
Lord affords us, are adapted therefore to the ways  
and methods, by which their Hostilities are carried  
on against us. By them we are assaulted with Guile  
and Treachery; and as nothing but Wisdom is an  
overmatch for Cunning, by him we are supported,  
and enabled to subdue them, by that Wisdom which  
cometh from above. The inward workings of our  
Thoughts and Passions are the Engines which they  
turn to our Destruction. The inward strivings of his  
saving Grace are the Arms which he employs against  
N 2 them.

SERM. them. If these are seconded by our own Endeavours, the Victory is ours; we are as sure of Conquest, as  
 XIX. we are that God's Power is too great to be resisted; and that nothing can hurt us, while he guards and watches over us, and with his *favourable kindness defends us, as with a shield.* This therefore is the last Instance of Christ's Regal Power, consisting in the Defence and Protection of his Subjects from the Wiles of *their ghostly enemy*; enduing them with Wisdom, and Strength, and Patience, and whatever other Virtues and Graces may be found necessary to support them in so sharp a Conflict; by adapting his Help to their several Exigencies; by cherishing their Virtue; by mortifying their Lusts; and, in general, by conducting them in Peace and Safety through the Waves of this troublesome World, *till they arrive at the haven where they would be.*

Thus much, I think, may be sufficient to explain what is meant by the word *Kingdom* in my Text.

II. I proceed therefore, *Secondly*, in pursuance of my design, to explain what is meant by its Coming. And now it may be asked, if the Nature of Christ's Kingdom be such as I have here described it, In what Sense it can be made the Subject of our Prayers? Did not Christ enter on his Regal Office as soon as he ascended into Heaven? was not all Power then given him both in Heaven and Earth? has he not already, by virtue of that Power, enacted Laws, required Obedience, and appointed Rewards and Punishments? does he not already protect his Subjects? has he not promised that he will continue so to do, and *be with them always unto the end of the World*? how is it then that we are still taught to pray, that this *Kingdom of his may come*?

In answer to these Questions, it will soon be understood, when I come to my *Second* general Head, in what Sense it is that we pray for this Kingdom, though it is plainly begun already. In the meantime, to shew you that this Kingdom, and no other, was meant by our blessed Saviour in my Text, it need only be observed, that by understanding the word *Kingdom* in any other Sense but this, you will confound this Petition with the next: But however that be, the best way to understand the true meaning of the Words before us, is to enquire in what Sense they were understood by the *Jews*, among whom they were in use before. For our Saviour, it seems, was so far from affecting Novelty, that he chose to confine himself, in composing this Prayer, as much as possible, to the *Jewish* Forms; out of which, by the help of such Supplements as were wanting, and by digesting the whole into a new Method and Order, he compiled a complete Prayer for his Disciples. Among others, the Petition in my Text is one, that was used in their publick Worship. It ran in these words: *let him make his Kingdom reign; let his Redemption flourish; and let his Messiah come and deliver his People.* From whence it appears, that the Kingdom of the *Messiah* was the Kingdom prayed for by them; and consequently, that the same Kingdom was intended here; which was the thing I undertook to prove.

Thus having shewn what Kingdom it is, that is the Subject of this Petition, I proceed, in pursuance of my design, *Secondly*, to explain what is meant by its Coming.

It cannot be denied, that with respect to Christ's Power, with respect to his Dominion both in Earth and Heaven, *his Kingdom is already come*: But withal

SERM. we must observe, that if there be any of his Subjects to whom his Laws have not yet been published; if there be any to whom his Name has not yet been mentioned, or any who disown his Power; with respect to them it is plain, that his Kingdom is not come, forasmuch as they live not in subjection to his Laws, nor receive any Benefit from his Government. Now it is very well known, that there are many People upon Earth, to whom the Gospel was never published; or if it was, it obtained so little Credit with them, that the Knowledge of it is now utterly forgotten. The great Continent of *America*, and the Islands belonging to it, had never so much as heard of the Name of Christ, till the time of the renowned *Columbus*. The Discoveries which he made, gave occasion to that Commerce, which is now settled in the western Ocean; and thereby became the means of promoting Christian Knowledge in those dark and uninstructed Regions. But as yet we are assured, it has made but slow Advances, being chiefly confined to those scanty Settlements, which are occupied by *European* Planters; while vast Tracts of Land inhabited by the Natives, containing many Kingdoms known only by their Names, and perhaps many others, whose Names we have never heard, are still sunk in the grossest Ignorance and Superstition. And what is much to be lamented, of the few Christians that are settled on the coasts of these vast Dominions, the greater part being *Spaniards*, the most wretched Bigots of all that are enslaved by the Church of *Rome*, and live in Bondage and Subjection to it; the Converts they make among their savage Neighbours, are brought over to their own Idol Worship. The Seed of God's Word is never sow'd by them, but with a mixture of Tares among it. The Errors  
and



and Corruption of that false Religion are taught SERM.  
with as much Care, and instilled with as much Zeal, XIX.  
as the Doctrines of Christ himself; and a Kingdom  
is erected over the Souls and Consciences of their  
miserably deluded Profelytes, as contrary to Christ's  
Kingdom, as Darknes is to Light; as contrary as a  
State of the most wretched Servitude, *to the glorious  
Liberty of the Sons of God.*

Yet this is the Religion, which prevails most in  
*Europe*, the chief Seat of Christianity itself. Great  
Care has been taken, and great Art employ'd to  
plant it on the coasts of *Asia*, in the great Kingdom  
of *Cbina*, the *Afiatick* Islands, and in all the richest  
and most plentiful Countries, where the Missionaries  
of *Rome* can get footing. In the Kingdom of *Tar-*  
*tary*, and the *Turkish* Parts of *Asia*, where the Gos-  
pel of the blessed *Jesus* was first published to the  
World, the few Christians that remain, are extreme-  
ly ignorant, and corrupted with many Heresies and  
Errors. The same Ignorance prevails on the coasts  
of *Africa*, where the Gospel was planted early by  
*St. Mark*. Of all the mighty Kingdoms in this Quarter  
of the World, none but the Country of the famous  
*Abyssines* continues to be entirely Christian. Some  
of them, if we may believe the Accounts of Tra-  
vellers, seem to live without God in the World,  
having no Priests or Temples, or Signs of religious  
Worship, nor any Tokens of Devotion in them.  
The rest of these Kingdoms, like the greatest part of  
*Asia*, consist for the most part of Pagans, or of Be-  
lievers in the Impostor *Mahomet*; who partly by the  
Promise of a Paradise hereafter, consisting in the  
Enjoyment of all sensual Delights, and partly by  
the Force of Arms, has established a Kingdom in  
these Parts of the World, as great as even *Christen-*

SERM. dom itself. In most of these Nations, and in all  
 XIX. parts of *Europe*, are scattered and dispersed a great  
 ~~~~~ Multitude of *Jews*, who live in expectation of the  
 Messiah's Kingdom, and consider it as a thing yet
 to come. Besides these, we may reckon, that in all
 Christian Countries there are some secret Infidels,
 and profest Apostates, *who are Enemies to the Cross of*
Christ, and are as far from owning him to be their
 King and Governor, as *Mabometans*, *Jews*, or *Pa-*
gans. If then from the Numbers of unbelieving Peo-
 ple, that almost cover the whole Face of the Earth,
 we were able to select the few faithful Subjects that
 submit to Christ's Power, that pay Obedience to him,
 and acknowledge him for their Lord and Master,
 how inconsiderable would their Number be? and
 how much would his Kingdom appear to fall short of
 the Descriptions, which are given of it by the Pro-
 phets, *that all people, and nations, and languages should*
serve him, that all the kingdoms of the earth should be-
come the Kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ; that he
should gather together the out-casts of Israel; and that
the fulness of the Gentiles should come in unto him!
 Till these and many other such exprefs Predictions,
 which are scattered up and down in the Writings of
 the Prophets, shall be fulfilled by the Growth and
 Increase of Christ's Church, his Kingdom is not
 fully come. And therefore, though it is actually
 commenced already, yet forasmuch as it is not come
 in its full Latitude and Extent, nor in the same sense
 wherein it was promised by the Prophets, it may
 very well be made the Subject of our Prayers.

To conclude this Head: The Establishment of
 Christ's Kingdom consists in Mens knowing and un-
 derstanding his Will, and submitting to his Rule and
 Government.

When

When therefore we pray, that this *Kingdom may* SERM.
XIX.
come, the meaning of the Request is, that true Christian Knowledge may in all Places flourish and abound; *That the sound of the Gospel may go out into all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world.* That *Jews, and Turks, and Infidels, and Heathens,* and all who have departed from the true Faith of Christ, may renounce their Errors, and submitting to his Laws be intitled to all the Blessings of Christianity; And that we and they, being united under him, professing the same Faith, joining in the same Worship, guided and conducted by the same holy Spirit, may be made Partakers of the Benefits of his Death, for the Attainment of everlasting Life.

Which God of his, &c.





A

S E R M O N

On MATT. VI. 10. *Thy Kingdom come.*

SERM.
XX.



IN discoursing on these Words, I have already shewn, that the Kingdom here meant is the Kingdom of the Messiah, that spiritual Dominion, which is exercised by Christ over all things both in Heaven and Earth; that the Establishment of this Kingdom consists in Mens knowing and understanding his Will, and submitting to his Rule and Government; and that as often as we pray, that this Kingdom may come, our Meaning ought to be, that true Christian Knowledge may in all Places flourish and abound, &c.

This is the main Substance of my last Discourse, in which I proposed only to shew the Meaning of the Words, that we might know how to use them in our Prayers.

But because it is suggested in the Lord's Prayer itself, by the Order of the two first Petitions, that the Glory of God is most eminently promoted by the coming of Christ's Kingdom upon Earth, *i. e.* by the propagation of the Christian Faith, and by the Increase

Increase of Christian Knowledge in the World, and SERM.
because for this Reason it is the duty of all Christians XX.
to contribute their Endeavours for the promotion of
this End, I shall close the whole Subject with some
brief Exhortations to it.

I. That the Glory of God is most eminently promoted by the Growth of Christian Knowledge in the World, is too evident to need any Proof. The Blood of our Saviour had been never shed, his Gospel had been never published, his Religion had been never instituted in the World, if his Death and Sufferings, his Resurrection and Ascension, and the consequence of these on the Lives of Men, had not some way or other conduced to God's Glory, and tended to set forth his Perfections to the World in the brightest and most lively Colours. What an amiable Idea must we form of that Mercy, which was moved to send the Son of God *to take upon him our Nature, and submit to Death upon the Cross*, rather than suffer Mankind, without Ransom or Satisfaction, to be exposed to the Punishment of their Sins? What an awful Idea must we form of that Justice, which could be satisfied by no less a Sacrifice? And how must we admire and adore that Wisdom, which contrived the Means to reconcile his Justice with his Mercy, and to give us a full View of those three Attributes together, all meeting in the most perfect Harmony? Again, if we take a view of those mysterious Articles, which concern his own Nature and Essence, what an Idea do *they* give us of the *Greatness* of that Being, the Properties of whose Nature cannot possibly be described by any Language, which our Reason can comprehend! Or lastly, if we consider the moral Part of Christianity, its Doctrines and Precepts for the Conduct of our Lives, and for the Govern-
ment

SERM. ment of our Lusts and Passions, how excellently are
 XX. they fitted to conform us to his Nature, and to give
 us an Idea of his Purity and Goodness, above all
 other Religions in the World! Thus is God's Glory
 most eminently displayed, by the Religion which his
 Son has taught us. And if it be viewed further, as
 it affects our own Happiness, as it tends to purify
 and reform our Nature, to mortify our Lusts, to
 subdue our Appetites, to cultivate and improve all
 Virtues in our Hearts, to enlarge our Views and
 extend our Prospect to the Interests of another Life;
here we have new matter of Praise and Wonder, new
 Cause to admire and adore his Goodness, which has
 been pleased to enlighten us with the Knowledge of
 his Will, to provide a cure for the infirmities and
 corruptions of our Nature, to quicken us with his
 Grace, to enliven us with his Promises, and to in-
 title us, by obedience to his holy Laws, to the en-
 joyment of himself hereafter. Thus excellent and
 perfect in every view is the Knowledge which
 Christ has taught us; and thus worthy to be pro-
 moted in the World. If then we are to pray for
 the coming of this Kingdom, it must needs be our
 Duty to promote it. We never think it enough
 in our temporal Concerns, to pray to God for *our*
daily Bread: But though we have done this, pro-
 ceed with as much care to the management of
 our worldly Business, as those who have no Con-
 fidence in his gracious Providence, but rely wholly
 on their own Endeavours. The same care we
 ought to take, and employ the same Zeal, to
 bring about the great Work before us; not
 thinking it enough to make a faint Request, for the
 increase of true Christian Knowledge; but using our
 Endeavours, in our several Stations, to promote it
 by

by our Lives and Actions. God does not work SERM.
Miracles now for the Instruction of the World. Men XX.
 are not now *inspired* with the Knowledge of their 
 Duty, nor enlightened by a supernatural Power.
 Whatever is done for the improvement of their
 Minds, must be done by some human Means. It is
 true, that after all our best Endeavours, the Event
 must be still left to God. Paul *may plant, and Apol-*
los water, but it is God that giveth the increase.
 Yet withal it must be observed, that without some
 Endeavours, there will be nothing for God's Grace
 to work on. If Paul doth not plant, nor Apollos
 water, there is scarce room for an increase from
 Heaven. The Seed of God's Word must be first
 sown in our Hearts, before the *Sun of Righteousness*
 can shine upon it, and enliven it with its friendly
 Beams. The most that can be expected from the
 Grace of God, in an ignorant and uninstructed
 Mind, is to cultivate and prepare the Soil, or in
 other words to give a teachable Disposition, or an
 Inclination to hear and learn. Whatever is sown in
 such a Soil as this may be expected to spring up
 and flourish, and by the blessing of God bring forth
 Fruits *unto Holiness, and in the End everlasting Life.*
 But if nothing be sown there, however it be pre-
 pared, nothing good can be expected from it. Vices,
 like ill Weeds, may spring up of themselves: But
 that Christian Virtue, to which we are called, can
 have no Root but true Christian Knowledge.

If therefore we have really that regard for God's
 Glory, which most of us, I hope, think we have,
 let us shew it by such a Zeal for the true Christian
 Faith, as is of all things the most likely to promote
 it; and let none of us say that it is not his Business,
 because he is not called to that solemn Trust of
 providing

SERM. providing for the Souls of others. For surely in a
 XX. Cause, which affects God's Glory, we are all greatly,
 though not equally concerned. We must needs
 know, that it is our duty to promote *the Glory of God*, with all the Faculties and Powers we have; that we can never promote it in a more effectual manner, than by teaching Men to serve him as they ought; and that if we have a regard to his Honour at our Hearts, it will constantly appear by its genuine Effect, *viz.* a Desire to promote Christian Knowledge. For that, *the Mouth of the Righteous is exercised in Wisdom, and his Tongue will be talking of Judgment.*

It is a sad thing to consider, what a multitude of Souls for which the Blood of Christ was shed, are continually lost for want of that Knowledge, which it was the business of his Life to teach. How can our Charity be exerted better, than by copying the Example of our Lord and Master, in scattering and dispersing those clouds of Ignorance, which overcast the Minds of Men, *giving Light to them that sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death, and guiding their Feet in the way of Peace.*

We are placed by God's Providence in a Christian Country, where in propagating and promoting true Christian Knowledge, we have none of those Difficulties and Dangers to contend with, that are to be found in other Regions of the Earth. No powerful Opposition from our earthly Rulers, no danger of Persecution for the Cross of Christ, however zealous we are to conduct our Brethren in the Way to everlasting Happiness. On the contrary, it is a Work, which is constantly attended with the Praises of the wise and good, and with the secret approbation of the wicked; with the Prayers of those who are the better

better for our Instruction, and with the Blessings of SERM.
 God himself. And now is it not strange, that in a XX.
 Christian Country so little of this Charity should be
 found? We are apt enough to lament the Ignorance,
 to pity the Miscarriages, and be sorry for the Faults
 of others: But in the mean time who labours to pre-
 vent them? Who will take upon him to remove
 the Cause? Who teaches and admonishes, who re-
 proves and exhorts, who advises and instructs his
 Neighbour? Who should do it, you will say, but
 those who undertake it; whose Business it is to teach
 Men their Duty, and induce them by the best Motives
 to perform it? Alas! how little can be done by the
 Preachers of God's Word, if they must needs stand
 alone against Vice and Ignorance, against the Preju-
 dices and Mistakes, the Pride, the Folly, the corrupt
 Principles, and ill Practices of Men! No Religion in
 the World was ever better taught, than Christianity in
 this Age and Nation: But how little it has prevailed,
 notwithstanding this; or how greatly Infidelity has
 prevailed against it, I need not go about to shew.
 Since therefore the common Methods appointed for
 this purpose do not answer the end proposed by
 them; since *the labourers that are sent into the wine-*
yard of the Lord are insufficient for the great Work
 assigned them; since the shameful corruption of
 Mens Faith and Manners has long since been a
 general Complaint; for God's sake, let it be a ge-
 neral concern: Let no Man be content, that he is
 convinced himself; but let him strive to convince
 others also; and to make himself an Instrument in
 the hand of God's Providence, to convert as many
 others from the Error of their Ways, as his Place,
 his Station, his Knowledge, his Example can give
 him any Influence over. To which generous Attempt,
 that

SERM. that no Motive may be wanting, it may further be

XX. observed, that the Spirit of our Religion is so well adapted to the Performance of all social Duties, that wherever it is planted, it carries Blessings with it, not only to the Person who is so happy as to receive it, but likewise to all those that are concerned with him. Charity and Humanity, and the Forgiveness of Enemies, are the great Doctrines that it every where inculcates. *Let all bitterness, says St. Paul, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Thus in the good Christian is implied the good Neighbour, and every other Character, that can sweeten Life, and make his Family and his Acquaintance happy. So that he who can infuse true Christian Knowledge into the Minds of those that want it, will in some sort share the Benefit himself, from the amiable Qualities which it always carries with it, disposing Men to a peaceable and benign Behaviour towards all that they have to deal with. Whoever has the Grace to be diligent and faithful in performing this pious Work, cannot fail to be rewarded by the duty and obedience of those who are instructed by him. When Men are once taught what they owe to God, when a sense of Religion is once planted in them, there is no fear but they will know what they owe to Men, and have a strict regard to their Duty to them, in all Circumstances and Relations of Life. It would therefore be the interest of a prudent Father to season his Child's Mind with religious notions, if it were only to make him dutiful and obedient to himself, and submissive to his will and pleasure. But however this be, in point

point of Conscience he is bound, as he tenders his SERM.
eternal Interest, not to suffer a Creature that he has XXIII.
brought into Being, to perish for want of care in
him; but to furnish him with such helps for the
knowledge of his duty, as may lead him to ever-
lasting Life. To neglect this Duty, and to leave
our Children to the suggestions of their own Lusts
and Passions, is emphatically to deny the Faith; it
is to act as if we thought that the Knowledge of Re-
ligion is a thing not worth their having; and what
worse opinion can the vilest of Infidels entertain of the
holy Gospel we profess? The more excellent and per-
fect our Religion is, the more care should be taken,
that no Time be lost from the performance of this ne-
cessary work. And to this we are engaged by a fur-
ther motive, besides those that have been already men-
tioned, even the natural Affection which we bear to
our own Offspring, and which in all other Cases,
except that of Religion, is apt enough to have an
influence on our Hearts. What a strange and incon-
sistent Behaviour is it, to take so much pains, and
bestow so much care to fit them for a short Settlement
here, and make no Provision for their Happiness in
another Life, which we are sure is to last for ever! For
a Parent to be so destitute of natural Affection, as to
take away the Life of his helpless Infant, is esteemed
a most inhuman Act: But is this to be compared to
the Cruelty of him, who can suffer his own Child,
for want of care in teaching him, to take such
courses as will ruin him for ever? What Parent that
has any Bowels of Compassion in him can help
trembling at the thoughts of exposing his own
Offspring to the fury of God's Wrath for ever?
And who can say, that this will not be the Case of
those who are given up by their careless Parents,
to

SERM. to the government of their own wild desires. And if
 XX. this be the case of the unhappy Children, what shall we
 say of those, who by their faulty management have
 been the Cause of their Sin and Misery? God forbid,
 that when we come to Judgment, our Hearts should
 reproach us with it! Rather may we be able to
 present our Children, and with them as many
 others as we have any Influence over, at the Judg-
 ment-seat of Christ, in the Number of those, *who*
have fought a good fight, who have finished their
course, who have kept the faith; and for whom
 therefore there is laid up a Crown of Righteousness,
 which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give them at
 that day, and not to them only, but likewise to all
 those who have labour'd to conduct them thither.

And who would not strive for such a recompense
 as this? Who would not forfeit his ease and quiet,
 the good-will of his Friends and Neighbours, or any
 thing which is most valuable and dear in his esteem,
 to be rewarded in the number of those holy Persons,
 who have been zealous for God's Glory, and the
 good of Mens Souls, by the Establishment of Christ's
 Kingdom upon Earth? by combating and opposing
 Infidelity and Profaneness, and by propagating both
 the Knowledge and true Spirit of Christianity in the
 Consciences and Souls of Men?

This was the great aim of the Confessors and
 Martyrs, that have suffered for the cause of Christ:
 This is the Perfection of the true Christian's Cha-
 racter; the highest pitch of Virtue, we can reach
 in this Life; and if we do not rest in the practice of
 this single Duty, but first purify ourselves, and then
 instruct others, it is a sure way to true Happiness
 hereafter.

Which God of his infinite, &c.



A

S E R M O N

On MATT. vi. 10.

*Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in
Heaven.*



THESE words are the last of those SERM. XXI.
 three Petitions, in the Prayer which
 was given us by our blessed Saviour,
 that are to be considered not only as
 Petitions, but likewise as Acts of
 Worship. In the first we acknow-
 ledge, that the Name of God *is worthy to be praised
 and had in Honour.* In the second we profess our sincere
 Belief, that his Glory can no way be so effectually
 promoted, as by the Coming of his Kingdom, *i. e.*
 by the Increase of true Christian Knowledge, till it
 is spread over the Face of the Earth. In the third,
 which is the Subject of my Discourse at present, we
 declare, that it is our duty to promote God's Glory
 by our Actions, as well as by our Faith; that the
 Coming of Christ's Kingdom, or true Christian Know-
 ledge, is intended to produce Obedience, forasmuch
 as it is the duty of all reasonable Creatures to con-
 form to God's Will in all things: and therefore we
 pray, that we may be able to do this in the most
 accept-

SERM. acceptable and perfect Manner, or, in the words of
 XXI. my Text, *that his Will may be done on Earth, as it is*
 in Heaven.

In discoursing on which words, I shall confine myself at present to a brief Exposition of the words themselves, with a practical Application of them.

I. An Exposition of the words themselves. And here, among the Multitude of Divisions that are given us, by which the Will of God is variously explained, and considered in many different Views, I shall only take notice of the Distinction which is made between the Will of his Precept, as it is sometimes called, and the Will of his Counsel or Decree. By the Will of his Counsel, or which is the same thing, of his Decree, is generally understood his eternal Purpose, by which he has pre-ordained the Events of things from the beginning to the end of Time; infomuch that the Counsels and Designs of Men, however freely they act, do finally concur to the Execution of his Will, and to the Performance of his most gracious Purposes. In this Sense the Will of God does always take effect; it is always done both in Earth and Heaven, nor can it ever be defeated by any human Means, however we may oppose our Wills to his, or labour to disappoint his Counsels. *There are many devices in the heart of man, said one, who understood it well; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.* Accordingly we find God himself declaring, *I will work, and who shall let it? The Lord of Hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his Hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* This

is what is meant by the Will of God's Counsel; in complying with which we are merely passive; we have nothing to do, but to submit to his Pleasure: to believe that the Issues and Events of things, being under his Government and Direction, are all ordered with the most perfect Wisdom; and that though we are not able to discover his Designs, yet we ought to be satisfied with his Dispensations to us, as well knowing, *that his Judgments are unsearchable, and his Ways past finding out,*

SERM.
XXI.

But to the Will of his Precept, or which is the same thing, of his Commands, an active Obedience is required. This is that Will, which he has any way revealed, as the Measure of our Obedience to him. Whatever we discover by the Light of Nature to be agreeable to the Will of God, whatever the holy Scriptures have taught us further, concerning the Manner in which it ought to be performed, is the Will of God's Precept or Command. And to this we are bound to conform our Wills, and to regulate our Actions by it. This being the reason for which it was revealed by him, who gives us Power to perform it. Which of these Senses is here to be understood, is the Question that now lies before us. It is certain, that the words, *Thy Will be done*, do most naturally import the former, that being the Sense in which they are understood in the Prayer, which was offered by our Lord himself before his bitter Sufferings upon the Cross; saying, *O my Father, if this Cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy Will be done*: In which words it is plain our Saviour does not pray, to be endued with Strength to perform God's Will by an active Obedience to it, but declares himself willing and content to suffer whatever should be inflicted on him. Agreeable to this Sense

SERM. Sense have been the Expositions, which some have
XXI. given, of the Petition in my Text; supposing it was
 ~~~~~ designed as an acknowledgment or confession, that  
 we submit and acquiesce in God's Dealings with us,  
 being content to suffer whatever Misery and Hardship  
 shall in the course of his Providence befall us. But  
 to this it may answered, that this Sense of the words  
 does not well agree with the words which follow,  
*On Earth as it is in Heaven*, where the Example of the  
 holy Angels is understood to be proposed as a Pat-  
 tern for our obedience here: and because it is agreed,  
 that those blessed Spirits are too happy in the Enjoy-  
 ment of their great Creator, to be acquainted with  
 any Misery or Sorrow, they cannot properly be pro-  
 posed as Examples of Patience, but rather of an  
 active Obedience to God's Laws, in all Instances of  
 Duty that may arise. Others therefore have explained  
 the Petition in my Text, as a request to God, to dis-  
 pose us by his Grace to comply with his Precepts and  
 Commands: in like manner as the holy Angels, that  
 encompass his Throne, are ready at all times to re-  
 ceive his Orders, and to execute his Will and Plea-  
 sure. And indeed it must be allowed, that as Obedi-  
 ence to God's Laws is a much more general and com-  
 prehensive Duty, than Submission to his Judgments  
 only, it is more likely to be the meaning of the Prayer.  
 But withal it must observed, that as Patience and Sub-  
 mission to the dispensations of God's Providence to us,  
 is included in the number of those precepts or com-  
 mands which God has given us to be a Rule of Duty,  
 it must consequently be included in the Prayer. By  
 the Will of God therefore, we are here to understand  
 his Will in both Senses of the Word: not only that  
 Will which he requires us to perform, but that also  
 which he executes upon us; not only that Will which



is a Rule to us, but that also which in some sort is a **SERM.**  
 Rule to him. That Will which determines him to **XXI.**  
 deal with us, as he does, and to which we must  
 ascribe, as the first cause of all, whatever happens to  
 us in the whole course of our Lives. The former of  
 these it is our duty to obey; and to be content and  
 well satisfied with the latter; and to comply with  
 God's Will in both these respects, is fully to perform  
 what we ask of God, when we say, *Thy Will be*  
*done.*

But because the Performance of God's Will in  
 Heaven, is proposed in the next words as an example  
 upon Earth, the next Question therefore that arises  
 from my Text, is, In what manner it is done in  
 Heaven? One exposition that has been given of these  
 words is, that the example of obedience which is here  
 fetch'd from Heaven, is taken from the Motion of the  
 Stars, which ever since they were fix'd in the Firma-  
 ment of Heaven, have continued in the same place  
 that was at first assigned them, without quitting their  
 Stations, or disturbing that Beauty and Harmony of  
 Order, which was established by their great Creator.  
 But sure, among the multitude of intellectual Beings  
 that inhabit those bright Abodes, we need not have  
 recourse to any lifeless Creature, as an Example to  
 our Virtue here. How much better Patterns are those  
 glorious Spirits, that are continually employed in  
 praising God; *those Angels of his that fulfil his Com-*  
*mandments, and hearken unto the voice of his Words!*  
 These, doubtless, are the Examples which Christ  
 proposes, as most worthy of our notice and regard.  
 And since he proposes them, it must needs be worth  
 while to enquire, in what manner they perform  
 his Will, and in what Sense they are Examples  
 to us.

It

SERM. It is but little, that the Scriptures teach us about  
 XXI. the nature of these glorious Beings; and perhaps it  
 ~~~~~ was impossible, considering our Weakness, to have  
 taught us much more than they have. Our Faculties
 and Powers are so short of theirs, that we can no
 more be made sensible of the difference that there is
 between us, than Brutes can have a notion of that
 principle of reason, by which we are distinguished
 from them. But as these are the highest order of
 created Beings, we may reasonably conclude that their
 Obedience is perfect, that the Service which they pay
 to their God and ours is suitable to the relation they
 bear to him, without any resistance of their Will
 against his, without any inclination to withdraw their
 Duty, but with the highest delight and satisfaction in
 performing it, springing from the best and most gene-
 rous motives, *viz.* Admiration of his Wisdom, Gra-
 titude for his Goodness, and Love of all his amiable
 Perfections. From hence we may gather further,
 that their Obedience is chearful, and consequently that
 it is quick and speedy, free from murmuring and repin-
 ing, and unnecessary delays, and ready to undertake
 the most laborious Service, forasmuch as there is no
 Service too hard to be performed by *that labour which*
proceedeth of love. We may likewise conclude further,
 that their Obedience is general, disposing them at all
 times, and on all occasions, to perform the whole
 Will of God, not declining any Duty, because it is
 hard, nor over-looking it, because it is easy; not
 hoping to atone for the Want of one by a greater
 Zeal in the performance of another; but constantly
 and regularly discharging their several Offices, with-
 out any exception or reserve. These are the Examples
 we are taught to copy; but because they cannot be
 exactly copied, it remains that we enquire, in the third
 and last Place,

III. In what Sense we pray, *that God's Will may be* SERM. XXI.
done on Earth, as it is in Heaven. Here we must re-
 member what was said before, that the Petition in
 my Text, is not only a Petition, but likewise an Act
 of Worship; an Acknowledgment, or Confession,
 that it is the duty of all Creatures to conform to the
 Will of God; that it ought to be obeyed by us
 Mortals upon Earth, as well as by the blessed Angels
 in Heaven. That as it is their Duty to perform the
 whole, so it is ours to do the most we can; that when
 we have done all, that our Faculties and Powers can
 enable us in this Life to do, we have done infinitely
 less, than his Goodness deserves, and the greatness of
 his Majesty may require. When therefore we pray,
 that we may *do his Will, as it is done by the holy Angels in*
Heaven, it is not so much a Request that we may do it,
 as an Acknowledgment of what we owe to him; we
 are not to expect that, in this State of Trial, we shall
 arrive at such perfect Holiness; but we are to declare
 our sincere desire, that we may arrive at as much
 Perfection as we can, and that, so far as is possible
 and consistent with human Frailty, we may conform
 our Wills to his; we are to wish we were able to do
 him better Service, being sensible of those many na-
 tural Frailties, which render our best Services imper-
 fect. At the same time, that we acknowledge his
 Wisdom and Goodness, in making us such Creatures
 as we are, we are also to breathe out the pious wishes
 of our Souls, that we were able to serve him in as
 acceptable a manner, as his better and more perfect
 Creatures; and forasmuch as we know, that this is
 not to be done, till by being divested of this vail of
 Flesh *we are admitted to the fellowship of those blessed*
spirits, we must pray, that in the mean time we may
 conform to God's Will, by submitting with Patience

SERM. to the Miseries and Infirmities, that are incident to
XXI. this present Life; among all the Changes and Chan-
 ces which attend it, resigning ourselves up to his
 gracious Providence, well satisfied with that de-
 gree of Strength, which it shall please him in his
 great Wisdom to allot us; and using our endeavours
 with Fear and Reverence, by a sincere, though not
 a perfect obedience to his Laws, to exchange it,
 when he pleases, for a better. Thus much for the
 meaning of the Petition in my Text. I proceed now,
 in pursuance of my first design, to make a practical
 Application of it. This I shall do, by considering di-
 stinctly the Reasonableness of complying with the
 Will of God, and the Benefits resulting from it.

I. The Reasonableness of complying with the
 Will of God. And because the Relation between
 God and us, though it cannot be described by any
 apt Similitude, is nevertheless expressed at the be-
 ginning of this Prayer, by the relation between a
 Father and his Son, let us first consider how the case
 stands in that plain and familiar Instance. Suppose
 it were said, that it is the duty of a Son to comply
 with his Father's Will; Would any Father think
 this Doctrine false, or endeavour to find out Except-
 tions? If any does, let him stay still his Son offers
 to dispute any one of his most severe Commands,
 and then he will soon see, how reasonable it is, that
 the Son should obey the Father. There is indeed
 one Exception, and but one, that can be made to
 the Authority of an earthly Parent; and that is,
 when he requires an Obedience from his Child, that
 is inconsistent with the Laws of God. In this case,
 the Child is not only excused, but even bound in
 Conscience to disobey the Parent, and modestly to
 insist on the Necessity of obeying God, in opposition

to all other Power. But even this supposes, that SERM.
 both Son and Father are bound to comply with XXI.
 their Father *which is in Heaven*: Otherwise there
 would be no Pretence, in this case, to dispute even
 the Commands of an earthly Parent.

Since therefore the only reasonable and just Exception, that a Son can have to the Authority of his Father, is the Authority of a superior Power; and since there is no Power superior to that of God, it follows, that no Exception can be made to his Authority, and therefore that it is the duty of all reasonable Creatures, to conform their Wills to his. This will appear further, by examining the Grounds upon which the Authority of all Parents is built. The only reason we can have for *requiring* Obedience from our Children according to the Flesh, is, either the Share we had in bringing them into Being, the care we have taken to nourish and preserve them, the natural Affection we are supposed to bear them, or the Notion of our superior Wisdom. Now for all these reasons, it is much more our duty to pay Obedience to the Will of God, without any exception or reserve. Did our natural Parents give us Life and Being? It was only in Obedience to those Laws of Nature, which were settled and ordained by him. Did they nourish and preserve their helpless Infants, when they were able to make no Provision for themselves? It was by virtue of that Instinct, which God planted in them for the Good of their tender Offspring, and which he has also planted, with the same wise design, in many Creatures that are void of reason. Do they still shew their Fondness and Affection to them, labouring and contriving to promote their Happiness, and make a comfortable Provision for them? This also is the effect of the

SERM. same wise design, which planted these Passions and

XIX. Affections in us, and turned them upon their proper

Objects. Or lastly, do we submit to our earthly Parents, on the account of their superior Wisdom? much more are we bound to submit to God's Will, who is infinite in Wisdom, as in all other Attributes, and who therefore must be allowed to be the fittest Judge of what is best and most convenient for us. Thus you see, that all the reasons, for which Children are required to pay Obedience to their earthly Parents, are much stronger reasons for Obedience to God, and Submission to his Will and Pleasure.

And now what can we do, to return Thanks to God for these great and undeserved Mercies? What can we do but make his Will our Rule, as it is the Rule of all other Creatures, those on Earth as well as those in Heaven. Not only the holy Angels that attend his Throne, but likewise all parts of the material World, though destitute of Reason, are in some sort obedient to the Will of their great Creator. The Moon observes her appointed season, and *the Sun knoweth his going down*. The Sea is confined within the Bounds prescribed it in obedience to that Voice, which reduced it into order, saying, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be staid*. The fiercest Elements, *fire and hail, snow and vapours, winds and storms, fulfil his word*. The lions, *roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from God*. The Beasts of the Field, the Fowls of the Air, and *whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas*, while they follow the dictates of their several natures, do but act in obedience to his high Commands, and execute his Will and Pleasure. And shall Man, the only Being on this side Heaven, that is capable of performing any reasonable Service upon

upon a Principle of Love and Duty, be the only Be- SERM.
 ing that is wanting in his Obedience? Where then is XXI.
 the Privilege and Use of Reason? What are we the ~
 better for those Faculties and Powers, by which we
 are enabled to contemplate God, if after all we are
 more irregular and disorderly Beings than those
 that know nothing of him? If any thing can be ga-
 thered from the Knowledge of a God, it is, that
 his Will should be the Rule and Measure of the Obe-
 dience of all his Creatures. The Reasonableness of
 this has been already shewn: I conclude with a few
 Motives to recommend it. And, first, by resolving
 to conform to God's Will, Religion grows easy to
 us. Great are the Complaints that are sometimes
 made, chiefly by sensual and worldly-minded Men,
 of the difficulties of a christian Life. And indeed it
 must be owned, that the Government of our Pas-
 sions, the Conquests of our Lusts and corrupt Af-
 fections, are very painful and laborious Virtues. But
 when once we are resolved to do the Will of God,
 the difficulty quite vanishes and disappears. When
 we act with this view, all Duties are alike; there is
 no difference between the hard and easy: For in this
 case the Law of God is our only Rule, we look no
 further than to know his Will, and our Way lies
 plain before us. We never question the Reasonable-
 ness of *executing* his Commands, nor regard whether
 the Task imposed upon us be agreeable to our *own*
 Wills or not: But cheerfully set about it, without
 staying to consider it, well knowing, that however
 it may mortify our Passions, however it may restrain
 and control our Appetites, yet, inasmuch as God
 wills and requires it to be done, his Grace will be
 sufficient for us.

SERM. One Advantage therefore, that must necessarily
 XXI. arise from a Readiness to conform to God's holy
 Will, is, that it makes our Religion easy; that it
 sweetens those harsher and severer Doctrines, which
 place our Duty in an unamiable Light, diverting our
 Thoughts from the Difficulty of performing them,
 to the Reasonableness of submitting to them; and
 thereby disposing us to the constant Practice of
 whatever is most irksome and disagreeable to our
 Nature, provided it be agreeable to the Author of
 our Nature, whose Will we acknowledge to be the
 Pattern of our own, as it is the Standard of all Pu-
 rity and Perfection. And this is the first Benefit re-
 sulting to us from a Conformity to the Will of God.

II. The next Advantage I shall mention, is that
 Quiet and Repose, that constant and habitual Peace
 of Mind, which a good Man enjoys in all Difficulties
 and Distresses, which in the course of God's Provi-
 dence befall him. He knows that all Hardships and
 Afflictions that can happen, are the Effects of the
 most perfect Wisdom; that therefore they are sent
 with some wise Design, though he perhaps is not
 able to discover it. He is also very sure, that the
 great Being which sends them is infinitely good and
 gracious, that *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve
 the children of men*: That therefore the Evils which
 he now endures, are either no real Evils, or else,
 through his Patience and Contentment under them,
 they will work for him a far more exceeding and eter-
 nal weight of glory.

A Man that thinks thus, is out of Fortune's
 Power: No Affliction, no Calamity can reach him.
 He cannot be disappointed, because every thing
 which happens, is therefore in his Opinion best; if
 he fails of that, which in his own Judgment he pre-
 ferred,

ferred, he corrects his own Judgment by the Event; SERM. and concludes he was wrong in the Choice he had XXI. made, because it was not the Choice of Heaven. Thus by resigning to the Will of Providence, we are made easy in all Circumstances of Life. And what can we desire more on this side Heaven, than to be superior to the Blows of Fortune; not to be disturbed by those Accidents and Disasters, that encompass us in this mortal Life, but constantly to preserve the same Evenness of Temper, the same Steadiness of Mind, the same Chearfulness of Heart, in Sickness as in Health, in Poverty as in Riches, in Contempt and Reproach, (if that should be our Fortune) as in the highest pitch of Honour and Renown? It is not the different Circumstances and Conditions we are in, the different Spheres in which we act, the different Rank we bear, the different Shews and Appearances we make in Life; but the different Tempers and Dispositions of Men, on which their respective Happiness depends. He that has fewest Wants and fewest Sorrows, must be allowed to be the happiest Man; and that is he, who is most thankful in Prosperity, and most patient in Adversity and Distress; or in other words, it is *he*, that is best pleased with all the Dispensations of God's Providence in the World, and is ready in all Accidents and Events that happen, to say chearfully, *God's Will be done*. Thus is Submission and Obedience to God's Will, the best Foundation for all human Happiness, with respect to this present Life. But; thirdly and lastly,

III. Another Benefit arising from such a Readiness to glorify God's holy Name, by Obedience to his Will and Pleasure, is the Prospect of a future Recompence in Heaven. Notwithstanding the Reasonableness of performing God's Will; Notwithstanding

SERM. ing the Delight and Satisfaction which it yields, and
 XXI. the Comforts it affords us in all Troubles and Dis-
 ~~~~~asters, that can disturb our present Quiet and Re-  
 pose, it has pleased the divine Goodness, for the  
 Encouragement of our Virtue, to allure our Hopes  
 to a Compliance with his Will, by the Prospect of  
 a further Recompence in Heaven. What this will be,  
 wherein it will consist, how greatly it will over-  
 balance our best Services and Endeavours, and how  
 infinitely transcend our Hopes, may be gather'd  
 partly from the Writings of the Evangelists and  
 Apostles, and in some sort from the Nature of the  
 thing; but by neither of these ways shall we be  
 able, in this Life, to arrive at a perfect and com-  
 plete Idea of that Glory, which is to be revealed.  
*The treasures in Heaven, the crown of Glory, the in-*  
*heritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away,*  
 and many other Expressions of the like Nature and  
 Import, are adapted to our present Passions, by  
 which we are inclined to pursue Wealth and Great-  
 ness, and to be fond of Crowns and Kingdoms.  
 When we are stript of these Bodies, and our Pas-  
 sions with them, our Love of these things will cease.  
 New Hopes and Desires, new Affections and Dispo-  
 sitions, new Enjoyments and new Pleasures will suc-  
 ceed, such as are worthy of an immortal Being,  
 such as will fill the Capacities of our Souls, and an-  
 swer all our Hopes and Wishes. But as it is impossi-  
 ble to describe such a State of Happiness, so perhaps,  
 if it were possible, it would have no Influence upon  
 some of us while we continue in this mortal Life.

1 But let him that thinks thus, consider with him-  
 self, what it is that makes him so averse to his Duty,  
 and causes him to look upon the Service of his  
 Maker as a painful and uneasy Task. Our Reason  
 tells

tells us, that we ought to honour and obey him. **SERM**  
 What is it that hinders? What makes us so unwill- **XXI.**  
 ing to comply with so sure a Guide? Is it not our   
 Passions, *that war in our Members?* When therefore  
 those Passions cease to move us, it is plain we shall  
 have other Thoughts; then we shall esteem it our  
 greatest Happiness, our highest Honour, to do the  
 Will of God, as it is done by superior Beings; who  
 having no Passions of this kind to gratify, have no  
 such Bias to mislead their Wills, and divert them from  
 the Pursuit of their only Happiness, in the Enjoy-  
 ment of their great Creator. Such will be our  
 Thoughts beyond the Grave, and such therefore  
 should our Thoughts be now. We should consider,  
 that Obedience to the Will of God will be then its  
 own Reward; that nothing but the Opposition of  
 our Lusts and Passions can hinder it from being so  
 at present; and that if we can but subdue *these*,  
 Obedience will be a Pleasure; a Pleasure even here,  
 much more hereafter, when *in the company of Angels*  
*and Archangels, and of all the host of Heaven,* we shall  
 continually be employed in serving that God, *in*  
*whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right*  
*band there is pleasure for evermore.*

Now to God, &c.





A  
S E R M O N

BEFORE

The KING'S HOUSEHOLD,

at Hampton-Court, October 3, 1731.

MATT. vi. 11.

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

SERM.  
XXII.



THE Comforts and Conveniencies, which God's Providence dispenses for the supply of our worldly Wants, tho' distributed by him with the greatest Wisdom, and carrying with them the highest marks of Goodness, are nevertheless, through the passions and mistakes of Men, the cause of great disorder in the World. The want of them is attended with uneasiness and discontent, tempting us to repine at God's gracious Providence, as if we were not kindly dealt with: The possession of them is accompanied with Arrogance and Pride, causing us to repose too great a trust in them, forgetting who it was that gave



gave them. Sometimes they are gained by unlawful Methods; sometimes withheld from those who have a right to them; and sometimes they are employed in the Service of our Lusts, and made the instruments of luxury and excess. To obviate these Evils, wise Men have thought that a middle State of Life is best, as being least exposed to those dangerous Temptations, which arise, on the one hand, from too great Abundance, and on the other hand, from Indigence and Want. And indeed if a good Man might be allowed to choose, or had the liberty of asking for such a state of Life, as he should think to be the most convenient, he could not ordinarily make a better Choice. But it is not for us, who are dependent Creatures, to measure out our own Happiness for ourselves; but to be content with that Station, which God's Providence has assigned us, to conform ourselves to it, to be easy in it, and to rely on his Bounty for such a share of good things, as will be most proper and convenient for it. It is therefore a much better and more reasonable Request, which we are taught by our blessed Lord to make, not that our condition may be chang'd from what it is, but made comfortable and convenient for us, by a constant Supply of those outward Blessings, which are suitable to our respective Stations. For so, I suppose, we are to understand this Petition; *Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

Bread is the best and most useful Viand, that God has given us for the support of Life; the great preservative of Health and Strength, by the help of which we can make a shift to live, though destitute of all other Nourishment, and without which our Tables are but ill supplied in the midst of all other Plenty. For this Reason it is used very properly to  
express

SERM.  
XXII.

SERM. expresses such a competency of Provision, as is indeed  
 XXII. sufficient, but no more than sufficient for us. For  
 ~~~~~ the same reason it is also called *daily Bread*, from  
 which we are to understand, how little should content us; even so much as is sufficient for our present Needs, and may just answer the occasions of the Day; without *taking thought*, or being over-much concerned about the Wants, which another Day may bring. Lastly, it is called *our Bread*, not as it were our Property, or as if we had any Title to it, but as specifying what share we ask for; even so much as is suitable to our circumstances and condition, and to the present state of our Fortune in the World. So much may we call ours, because God has given it; and to be deprived of this, be it more or less, would be a Loss and a Disappointment to us. It is evidently God's Will, as appears from his Dispensations, and from the course of his Providence in the World, that there should be great difference in the Circumstances of Men. Some he has advanced to high Dignity and Honour, and some sunk in the lowest Offices of Life. The Wants and Necessities of these Men are different, according to their different Figure in the World; not only their imaginary, but their real Wants; not only those Wants which they create to themselves, by their own wild and irregular desires, but also those Wants which are created for them, by the rank and station in which Providence has placed them, and which they may lawfully desire to be supplied. A multitude of Attendants, and a great Retinue, may be necessary for those who bear rule and authority, or who are in any eminent or conspicuous Station, forasmuch as they help to secure obedience, and tend to promote reverence and respect. There is also a certain decency

cency in domestick Furniture, in Diet and Apparel, SERM.
XXII.
to be observed by those who are possessors of much meaner Fortunes, in proportion to the Wealth where-
with God has blessed them, provided it be conducted by the rules of Frugality, and provided it be free also from Ostentation and Vanity, as well as from Luxury and Excess. Our Wants may likewise be very much increased by the relation which we bear to others; by the necessity of providing for our immediate Offspring, or those who for other causes, of which there may be many, can have any reasonable expectations from us. All these are reasons for enlarging our requests beyond the bounds of our own natural desires; so that That, which is allowed to be enough for one, may be far short of what is necessary for another; and therefore, when we all join in our requests to God, that he will *give us our daily Bread*, we may very reasonably have different meanings. He whom God's Providence has appointed to perform the meanest Offices for the use of others, may perhaps ask no more, when he makes this Petition, than the use of his Limbs, the enjoyment of his Health, and God's Blessing upon his honest Labours, that he may earn his Living by the Sweat of his Brows, according to the intention and design of Providence, which has placed him in that humble Station, and can as easily advance him from that low condition to a state of everlasting Happiness, as from the highest pitch of human Greatness; and in the mean time, can make even that condition to abound with as much solid and substantial Happiness, as can be had from the highest station upon Earth. But he, who was either born to a more exalted Fortune, or, by the Blessing of God upon his good Endeavours, has acquired it by his own art or labour,
may

SERM. may be allowed to include more, in his Petition for
XXII. *daily Bread*, than those who are of meaner Substance.

Thus we see, that to pray for our *daily Bread* is, to pray for such a share of all outward Blessings, as is necessary for our well-being in the World; and that, not only a mere maintenance or subsistence, but such a suitable Provision, as though it cannot be sufficient to make us independent for the future, may nevertheless be enough to make us easy for the present, in a way suitable to our respective Stations. But whereas it was said above, that by *daily Bread* is meant no more than such a competent Provision, as may just answer the occasions of the Day; and whereas it is implied in the Petition itself, that we should ask for no more at once, being directed to pray only, that he will give it us *this Day*, exclusive of all future Wants; we are not to understand, that we are hereby prohibited to make Provision for ourselves against a time of Need, or to lay up for others as much as can be spared from the Store wherewith God has blessed us. This is no more than we all know to be a Duty, and no more than is consistent with the Petition in my Text for the supply of our present Exigencies only. For though it may be proper, for the sake of others and ourselves, to provide more than we strictly want at present; yet it may not be proper to ask more of God, of whom the less we ask, the more Humility we shew, and the more Confidence do we place in his bounty to us; confessing withal, that every Day we live, we depend only on his gracious Providence, not only for those things, which are then to be bestowed, but for those also, which we have received already. And hence it is, that the rich and great, who never want a competent Provision for themselves, do nevertheless, as
often

often as the Day returns, very properly renew their request to God, that he will give them their daily Bread; intimating thereby their acknowledgment to him, that their plenty proceeds from his Bounty to them, and that notwithstanding the Treasures they have laid up in store, they depend wholly on his Goodness for the use of them; since he might, if he pleased, by a single act of his Will, take them from their Treasures, or their Treasures from them, and leave them destitute of all worldly Comfort. In short, by asking for our daily Bread, we declare our Confidence and Trust in God, that he will supply us from time to time; that as he will relieve us at our request to-day, he will relieve us also at our request to-morrow; that it is not for us, like the Prodigal in the Gospel, to desire our whole Fortune may be given us at once, but to trust it in the hands of Providence; where it will certainly be much safer than in our own, and from whence it will be dispensed in such Portions, and at such Seasons, as will be most proper and convenient for us. In the mean time, it will argue no distrust of this Providence, if we labour and endeavour, in our several Stations, to promote our own Fortunes for ourselves; this being the Method, by which Providence is accustomed to dispense its Bounty to us. Thus while we are praying for the Bread of one Day, we may lawfully be providing for another; and when we have provided for many Days and Years, we may still ask for our daily Bread, inasmuch as we are dependent on God's Bounty still, and know not how soon he may revoke his Blessings, and leave us in utter Indigence and Want.

Thus much for the meaning of the Petition in my Text; I proceed now to a few practical Observations, and so conclude.

And

SERM. And, First, by thus praying for our daily Bread, **XXII.** we are taught (as I observed) to depend on God's Providence for all the comforts and conveniences of Life. Not to rely on our own Craft and Subtlety, much less on our Fraud and Treachery, as if we were able to over-rule God's Will, or to frustrate and disappoint his Counsels; but to look up to him for the success of our designs, and for the fruits of all our labour. With these thoughts about us, we shall be careful to do nothing, that we have reason to think will be displeasing to God, without whose assistance it cannot be expected that any of our designs will prosper. For the same reason, we shall be careful to pursue nothing we set about by dishonest and unlawful Methods, being assured that our Projects so managed and conducted, can never be attended with a Blessing from above, and therefore that it is in vain to ask God's Assistance, while we are engaged in such Practices as he abhors. One advantage therefore we receive from this Prayer is, that as often as we repeat it, we are put in mind of the necessity of being upright in all our dealings, and the vanity of expecting Prosperity in the World, while we seek it by dishonest Methods, which, however they may seem to advance our Interest, and for some time to increase our Stores, seldom fail at last to bring shame and disappointment, and to end in our utter ruin. But,

Secondly, By acknowledging that all we receive, is the Bounty or free Gift of God, every thing which is brought about by God's Providence to our advantage, is not only received with the greater gratitude, but enjoyed with the more pleasure and content. To imagine that Good and Evil are distributed without reason, and that *there is one event to the righteous and*

the wicked, must to a good Man be a very melancholy SERM.
Thought. But to know that God's Providence is XXII.
concerned in the disposal of all Events, which ever
happen in the World, and that nothing can befall us
without the counsel or permission of an infinitely gra-
cious Being, who will hearken to our Prayers, and
relieve our Wants, and supply us with all comforts
and conveniencies, that are necessary for our Passage
through this vale of Misery, must be a chearful re-
flection to one who makes it his endeavour to secure
to himself an Interest in Heaven, and is confident
that whatever happens, happens well for him, while
he studies to approve himself to the great Author of
his Being, and flies to him for refuge in distress. To
such a Man as this, who has his Eyes fixt on Heaven,
God's Blessings are doubly welcome; First, as they
are Blessings, and in their own Nature welcome; and,
Secondly, as they come from God, whose Favour and
Protection he discovers with the Eye of Faith in his
various dispensations to him. Prosperity and Success
in his worldly Business, is to him an argument that
his Prayers are heard, which is an infinitely greater
and more substantial Happiness, than Prosperity itself
can give. But a Man of this turn must needs be
happy, though Success never crowns his Wishes.
Disappointments themselves become Blessings to him,
forasmuch as even these are the Gifts of God, and
he has reason to think, will be much better for him,
than that which he made the subject of his Prayers.
Nothing can be indifferent to a Man so disposed;
every thing which happens, conspires to give him
Pleasure, and to raise his Affiance and Trust in God,
which is the highest Happiness that this World can
give. If his allowance of good things be but short
and scanty, 'tis as much as he asks; 'tis his daily
Bread;

SERM. Bread; 'tis as much as God's Providence thinks proper for him, and therefore he is well satisfied with it. *XXII.*
Having food and raiment, therewith he is content, and would still be content, if it were taken from him, well knowing that even this would be more to his advantage, for that the want of it would be made up to him hereafter. Thus does this confidence and trust in God make us chearful in all Circumstances and Conditions.

But, Thirdly, we may observe, that by thus praying to God, and thereby considering him as the great Author of our Riches, we become humble in the midst of Plenty. Affluence and abundance is apt to make us insolent, especially if we consider it as an Acquisition of our own, and forget who it was that gave it. But constantly to offer up our request to God, that he will give us our daily Bread, is to own our dependence on his daily Favour, to acknowledge the uncertainty of our worldly Riches, and to humble ourselves before him, as unable by our own Strength to provide for our many Miseries and Wants. Without asking for our Bread, we might think it was our own, as too many do, who accordingly misuse it in all wantonness of riot and excess. But to ask, implies Want, and Want Humility, there being nothing more absurd and preposterous in Nature, than a Mixture of Pride and Poverty. And thus is this Prayer for the relief of our Wants, a good Remedy against the Sin of Pride. But this is not all. By looking up to God for the Blessings of his Providence upon us, we are taught, Fourthly, to be charitable to others. First, by the Example of our gracious Benefactor, who *giveth largely, and upbraideth not.* Secondly, by the end for which he gives us Wealth, not to hoard it up, or to lavish it away, but to provide for the Wants

Wants of others. We see that God, who is loving SERM.
unto all, and whose Mercy is over all his Works, XXII.
does yet suffer many to be destitute of those Blessings, ~
of which we perhaps have too large a share. And
what can we gather from his thus dealing with us, but
that he designs to make us his Stewards for the Poor,
and Dispensers of his Bounty to them. When there-
fore we pray to him for our daily Bread, with a due
sense of our dependence on him; when we consider
how uncertain our Possessions are, that our sustenance
for a Day is as much as we can ask, and that it may
be all wasted and gone to-morrow, it should put us in
mind to provide for others in like manner as he does
for us; we should consider how little it is worth our
while, to treasure up for ourselves uncertain Riches,
when we may make them turn to much more account,
by dispersing them among those that want them. We
should consider also, what a Privilege it is to be in-
trusted with the use of Riches, by the help of which
we are enabled in some sort to supply the place of
God's Providence to others. In a word, we should
reflect, that by relieving their Wants, we are entitled
to ask at the Throne of Grace with more confidence
for the relief of our own; and that by thus laying
out our worldly Treasure, *which moth and rust do cor-
rupt, and to which thieves break through and steal,* we
shall secure to ourselves *a treasure in Heaven, where
neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do
not break through and steal.* Here our Possessions are un-
certain and precarious, of no long continuance, and
held only from one Day to another; but there they
will be certain, durable and lasting, and will continue
in our own Hands for ever. May we all therefore,
by a wise and prudent use of the Blessings his Provi-
dence bestows upon us, arrive at last at *that land of
promise,*

SERM. *promise*, in which they will be no longer wanted. In
XXII. the mean time, let the advice of our Saviour be re-
 membered; and let us not labour for the meat which
 perisheth, but for the meat which endureth to everlasting
 life, which the Son of Man shall give unto us.

*To whom, with the Father, and the holy Ghost, be
 ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Power, Might,
 Majesty, and Dominion, both now, and for ever-
 more.*





A

S E R M O N

On MATT. vi. 12.

*And forgive us our Debts, as we forgive
our Debtors.*



IN these words, there are two things SERM. XXIII.
observable. First, the Petition, *forgive*
us our Debts; And, Secondly, the con-
dition on which we ask Forgiveness,
as we forgive our Debtors. Both these
are Subjects very worthy to be considered; the for-
mer, as it affords us the highest Instance of God's
Goodness and Compassion to the Sons of Men; the
latter, as it is a Motive to the Forgiveness of our
Enemies, one of the hardest of all Christian Duties.
I shall therefore at this time consider them in their
Order. And,

First, I shall shew, how the Mercy and Goodness
of God is remarkably display'd by the Permission
here given us, to pray to him for the Forgiveness
of our Sins.

The temporal Blessings which his Providence dis-
penses for the supply of our worldly Wants, are Ar-
guments indeed of great Goodness to us, and deserve
our highest Gratitude and Love. But these are mat-
ters

SERM. ters of small moment to us, in comparison of those
 XXIII. which look beyond the Grave, and yield a Prospect
 of better things to come. For what would it avail
 us to be supplied by his Bounty with the necessities
 of this present Life, if our Sins were to follow us to
 the next; and if the Debts we had contracted, were
 never cancell'd here, but placed to our Account, when
 we are summoned to appear *at the Judgment-seat of*
Christ? if the Sins and Offences of our Youth and
 Old-age were registered and treasured up against us;
 if no Act of Oblivion was to pass upon our Actions,
 no Pardon granted, no Method of Atonement ap-
 pointed to blot out our Sins, no assurance that our
 Prayers and Supplications will be heard, no direction
 to ask that our Debts may be forgiven, as we forgive
 our Debtors? We had all been concluded under Sin,
 says the Apostle, and consequently under Punishment.
 Our Sentence had been irreverfible, our Condemna-
 tion sure; and the Blessings and Conveniencies we
 enjoy at present, had served for nothing else, but to
 make our Passage easy to a State of everlasting
 Misery. Who could be so fond of a short momentary
 Life, as to value it on such Terms as these?

It is the glorious Prospect that we have before us;
 the certainty, that if we are not wanting to ourselves,
we may work out our own Salvation, obtaining by the
 merits and satisfaction of our Lord, what we were
 not able to secure for ourselves; I say, it is this pro-
 spect, this hope, this confidence, in which our true
 Happiness consists. The means of Forgiveness are
 placed in our own Hands, and therefore it is our
 own fault if we miscarry: If we will but lament our
 past Offences, and forsake them for the time to come;
 if we will but rely on God's Mercy through Christ;
 if we will but *forgive those that have offended us,* in
 con-

conformity to his Example and Command, no Iniquity shall be imputed to us. And therefore, with these thoughts and designs about us, we may boldly have recourse to the Throne of Grace, and plead there for the Forgiveness of our Sins, *being justified freely by God's Grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood.*

And now, when we consider the wretched State we were in, before Christ undertook our Ransom, the necessity of Sinning, the certainty of our Punishment, and how little reason there was for God to accept of a Satisfaction, to reconcile such Rebels to him; we cannot but esteem it a high Instance of God's Goodness, that he was pleased to provide a Remedy himself, and to point out a Method, by which Mercy might take place, and yet Justice be fully satisfied: Such a Method as nothing but his own Wisdom could contrive; such a Method, as the holy Angels were not able to discover, much less could Man have discovered it for himself, by all the Art that his own Misery could suggest.

The Use therefore that we ought to make of this amazing Goodness, is, first, to reflect with gratitude upon it, and to acknowledge the Sense we have of our unworthiness to receive it, and the utter Impossibility of our obtaining Mercy *without the free Grace of God.*

As there was nothing in our Power, that could influence God, or move him to shew Mercy to us; and as there was no Satisfaction, but the Blood of our Redeemer, that could consistently with God's Justice be accepted by him, our condition was quite desperate and hopeless. No one could have expected, that God himself should submit to pay the Ransom for us,

or

SERM. or indeed that it was possible to unite the divine Nature in such a manner to our sinful Flesh, that as Man had sinned, so Man should suffer, and yet that his Sufferings, by virtue of that Union, should be a full and perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, which it was impossible for mere Man to make. But thus it was ordered. Thus God was satisfied, and thus Man was redeemed from Misery; thus was he rescued from everlasting Punishment, and entitled to everlasting Glory: And he that is not moved by such Benefits as these, he that can reflect upon them without Love and Gratitude, does very well deserve to lose them; nay, it is certain he will lose them: Notwithstanding Christ's Sufferings, his Portion will be no better than it was.

And this leads me to take notice of another Use, we ought to make of God's Goodness thus manifested unto us; and that is, that we labour to secure those Blessings, that are thus purchased by the Blood of Christ. It is true, that no other Sacrifice is necessary to be offered, no other Satisfaction is required by God, but the Blood of our dear Redeemer. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.* But we are not so healed, as to be past danger of relapsing; we are not so rescued from the Bondage of Corruption, that we are secure of God's Favour for the future. The Christian Life is a State of Trial and Conflict. He that bought us with a Price, has a right to our Obedience; and at the same time that he exempted us from the Punishment of our Sins, he laid upon us an Obligation to forsake them; to abstain from all wilful and premeditated Offences; and to repent of those slips and miscarriages which are unavoidable, through
the

the frailty and infirmity of our Nature ; above all, to SERM. pray to God for Mercy and Forgiveness, in like manner as Christ has taught us ; and, in order to obtain it, to be ready to forgive others, according to the full Purport of my Text, *forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors* : Where we see, that to forgive those that trespass against us, is a necessary condition, without which we cannot pray for the Forgiveness of our own Trespases and Sins. Since therefore it is a matter of so much consequence to our Happiness, and a Duty, which, if we may judge from the Practice of Mankind, is one of the hardest that our Religion has required, it may be worth while to consider it distinctly.

And, First, I shall enquire, what it is that is expected of us. To which purpose it may be proper to consider what we mean, when we ask Forgiveness for our own Trespases and Sins. For in whatsoever Sense we ask it of God, in the same also we ought to exercise it to others. The Forgiveness of our Debtors, or, which is the same thing, our Enemies, being here made not only the Condition, but the Example of the Forgiveness which we ask of God. Now it is certain, that when we ask God the Forgiveness of our Debts, *i. e.* of our Trespases and Sins, our Meaning is, that he will not punish us for them ; and not only so, but that he will take us into Favour, and afford us the same Succour and Protection from above, the same Assistance of his Grace, the same Title to everlasting Happiness, as if we had never sinned against him. Thus is the Forgiveness that we ask of God, described always in holy Scripture to us. The Sacrifice of Christ's Death is a propitiatory Sacrifice, causing God to be propitious to us. *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* We are admitted thereby to many honour-

SERM. able Titles, and many Privileges belonging to them.

XXIII. From all which it appears, in the Language of the Apostle, *that we are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ*: that we are not only pardon'd our past Offences, but are also re-admitted to God's special Favour, and may expect further Benefits at his hands. And from hence we may see plainly, in what sense it is that we ought to forgive our Enemies. Not only to abstain from all Acts of Violence, all Instances of Revenge, all hurtful and injurious Treatment of their Persons, their Fortunes or Characters in the World, but also to do them good to the utmost of our power, and to take all opportunities to befriend them.

This is what we ask when we pray to God for ourselves, and this therefore we ought to shew to others. And he that does less, whatever he may think, or however he may abound in any other Virtue, may be assured that he will never be forgiven. It is indeed a hard saying, but it is no more than our Lord has told us. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, says he, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.* One would think that such a positive and express assertion from the mouth of our blessed Saviour, which, I believe, is as well known, and as generally understood, as any other in the whole word of God, might discourage us from all Methods of prosecuting our Revenge, without any other Argument to enforce it. And indeed, if the Fear of God's Vengeance on our Sins will not move us to be more charitable to others, it is not to be expected, that the reason of the thing should have any Influence or Effect upon us.

But let it not however be omitted, in the second Place, that the Forgiveness of our Enemies, as I have

now

now explained it, is, in several Views, a very reason-^{SERM.}
able duty: a command, which, one would think, ^{XXIII.}
should be more readily comply'd with, than in fact it
appears to be, and that for these following reasons.

First, Because it is the Badge of our Profession as
Christians, the Precept which distinguishes our Reli-
gion from all others, that were ever taught or prac-
tised in the World. That which was said by the *Jews*
of old time, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate*
thine Enemy, was said also by all Nations and Ages,
and was never contradicted, till our Lord appeared,
and commanded us to love our Enemies. *But I say*
unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good
to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully
use you and persecute you. This was a new strain of Be-
nevolence to Mankind, that was never reached by
any other Teacher. Morality was never raised to such
a height as this, by the greatest Masters of Reason
that had appeared before, for the Benefit and Instruc-
tion of the World. It is a Doctrine, which bears the
Marks of its divine Original, and which could never
have been revealed and made known on Earth, but
by the Son of Man who came down from Heaven. And
yet, since it has been revealed by him, it appears every
way worthy of its Author. There is something in the
Notion so magnificent and sublime, and in the Prac-
tice so great and generous, that there is an Heroism,
a Christian Heroism in performing it. There is a great-
ness of mind in forgiving Enemies, far above the
greatest and most renown'd Atchievements of those,
who have filled the World with the Fame of their
Actions, their Victories, Exploits and Triumphs. And
therefore a great Mind should be moved to the Prac-
tice of it, if for no other reason, yet at least for this,
that it is an excellent and praise-worthy Virtue;

SERM. that as it is an Argument of a little Mind, to tram-
 XXIII. ple and insult upon a conquer'd Enemy, so to medi-
 ~~~~~ tate Revenge, to shew an Enemy we can hurt him,  
 is an ungenerous and mean Ambition; and that to  
 conquer ourselves, to subdue our Anger, to get the  
 better of a malicious and revengeful Temper, is not  
 only the Duty of a Christian as such, but in truth  
 the greatest Action, the most laudable Ambition, the  
 most excellent of all Virtues we can boast.

Secondly, to this Virtue we may be further en-  
 couraged by the Example of God himself, and of  
 Christ, who, as a Man of like Passions with our-  
 selves, is a fitter Pattern for us Men to copy. Our  
 Redemption was accomplished, God signed our Par-  
 don, and Christ paid the Ransom for us, at a time  
 when we were Rebels and Enemies to God, and  
 could therefore have no Hopes of Mercy. But Ene-  
 mies, as we were, God loved us still; it was Love  
 that moved him to have Compassion on us, and to  
 accept of any Ransom for us. And it was Love that  
 moved Christ to lay down that Ransom, when we  
 had no reason to expect any Favour from him, but  
 rather *the due Reward of our Sins.* For God so loved  
*the world,* says the Apostle, *that he gave his only be-*  
*gotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not*  
*perish, but have everlasting life.* Herein is Love, says  
 the same Apostle, *not that we loved God, but that he*  
*loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our*  
*Sins.* And concerning Christ's Love, it is observed by  
 himself, *that greater love hath no man than this; that*  
*a man lay down his life for his friend.* Thus was  
 the Love of God to us Rebels and Apostates, made  
 manifest by the Redemption of the World. Upon  
 every Transgression, we become Enemies again:  
 But as often as we transgress, if so often we re-  
 pent,

pent, so often does his Mercy pardon. Such is SERM.  
the Example that we have to follow. And surely XXIII.  
to imitate our great Creator, in that which is his  
darling Attribute, is an Ambition well worth our  
Study. *We cannot be pure, as he is pure, nor perfect,*  
*as he is perfect. But merciful we may be* to all Per-  
sons that offend us, without any Restriction or Re-  
serve. It is said indeed, by malicious People, that  
they can not forgive their Enemies, by which we  
are to understand they will not. For that, strictly  
speaking, we are not able to forgive, when we are  
indeed willing and desirous to do it, is a Contra-  
diction, because nothing but the Will is wanting:  
If I am willing to forgive, I have actually forgiven,  
and shall never, as long as that Will continues, have  
any desire or inclination to Revenge. As, on the  
other hand, if I find that I meditate Revenge, I  
cannot say that I am willing to forgive. This there-  
fore is a Pretence, that has no Foundation: And  
there is certainly no Injury so great and grievous,  
that we may not easily forgive, if we please. It is  
but to think of our own Trespases and Offences,  
and the Multitude of Provocations that we have  
given to God: *And then let us bear Malice, if we*  
*can.* If we can, it is plain, we have no Christian  
Spirit. We either disbelieve what Christ has told  
us, or else we are deceived by false hopes of Par-  
don, when it shall please God to give us better Dis-  
positions, or else we are indifferent what becomes of  
us, if we can but once execute our Revenge; a  
Temper so malicious, implacable and unmerciful,  
that we cannot think of it without some kind of  
Horror; a good Christian, I am sure, would not  
harbour it in his Breast for all that this World can  
give. But

SERM. Thirdly, Another Motive to forgive our Enemies, XXIII. is the Peace and Quiet it affords. This is indeed but a worldly Motive, but withal it is a Motive which the Scripture offers, and one would think it should have great Influence on our Hearts. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him, says the Apostle: If he thirst, give him drink; For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.* Rom. xii. 20. Coals of Fire, not to waste and consume him, but to melt him into Tenderness and Love. For who can withstand such gentle Treatment, such a kind and compassionate Concern for those, who have deserved it so very little at our Hands? *To return Good for Evil*, is not only a most christian, but likewise a most happy Temper, as it is the best means of preserving that Intercourse of good Offices, in which the Happiness of Society consists. While Men are Men, there will always be Complaints of Sights and Indignities, of Injuries and ill Offices, that are offered by one Man to another. And as long as they are resented, and made matter of Contention, there will be no such thing as good Neighbourhood in the World. One Injury begets another, till a War commences, which is frequently fatal to one Party or the other, and always very troublesome to both. And yet when we come to trace the greatest Quarrels and Dissensions to the Fountains from which they sprung, how often do they end in a mistaken Word, a mis-reported or misinterpreted Behaviour, or in something which at first might have easily been overlooked, and its fatal consequences at once prevented! But when once the Seeds of Discontent are sown, they are still growing, till they bring forth Revenge; when the Spark is kindled, new Fuel is administered by every Word and Action of the offending



sending Party, till it breaks out into a Flame too vio- SERM.  
 lent to be resisted, and which nothing but Blood can XXIII.  
 quench. If it stops short of this, if it goes no fur-  
 ther than to blast the Credit, or hurt the Fortune of  
 our Enemy, what a Scene is here laid for mutual  
 Investives, for mutual Acts of Violence and Wrong!  
 Who can be easy in such a state of Enmity? Who  
 can have any Comfort, while he carries in his mind  
 such a Load of unquiet Passions? And is conscious  
 at the same time, that by his Enmity to his Fellow-  
 Creature, he is at enmity *with him that made him!*  
 That he is exposed to God's Wrath, and incapable  
 of Pardon; *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond*  
*of iniquity*; and that as often as he prays by our  
 Lord's Commands, he prays that God's Vengeance  
 may be executed upon him, and that he may suffer  
 the full Punishment of his Sin? Whereas by re-  
 solving to forgive his Enemies, by passing by the  
 little Injuries and Slights of others, by shutting his  
 ears against Rumours and Reports, that are often  
 spread abroad by malicious tongues, to promote  
 Jealousies and Discontents among us; by stopping  
 the first tendencies and inclinations to Revenge;  
 by doing Good to all, not excepting those, whom  
 he knows to have done Injuries to him; he does all  
 that he can to promote Peace and Quiet; he is at  
 least easy in himself, however he may be disturbed  
 by the Insults and Affronts of others; he maintains  
 a perpetual Serenity within, is at Peace with him-  
 self, with his Neighbour, and with his God; or if  
 the World *will* disquiet and molest him *here*, is sure  
 of eternal Rest *hereafter*.

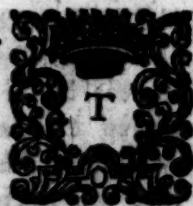


A

## S E R M O N

On MATT. vi. 13.

*And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver  
us from Evil.*

SERM.  
XXIV.

THE only Questions, that can arise upon the meaning of these Words, are, First, what is meant by the Word *Temptation*. Secondly, in what sense God may lead us into it. And Thirdly, What is meant by *Evil*.

When these Questions are answered, we shall know the full Import of the Request we are here taught to offer up to God, and no Difficulty will remain concerning it.

And, First, as to the meaning of the Word *Temptation*, it is evident from holy Writ, that Temptations in one sense are far from being formidable to a Christian. My Brethren, says St. James, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience, James i. 2. And blessed, says he again, is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. ver. 13. *Temptation*, in this sense, is, you see, matter of Joy: It is a Blessing, and a Token of  
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God's Favour to us; it has a natural Tendency to produce Patience in our Hearts, and entitles us to a Crown of Life. When therefore our blessed Saviour instructed his Disciples, *to watch and pray, that they entred not into temptation*, and when he gave us this Form, to be of constant use among Christians in all Ages of the World; by *Temptation* he could not mean the same thing that is intended by St. James in the above-cited Passages; but something which is an Evil, and which therefore it is our duty to pray to God for his Grace to avert. Now it is certain, that Temptations considered by themselves, are absolutely neither good nor evil, but may become either, according as they are used, and according to the Strength of the Person who is tempted, and the Influence which they have upon him. Whatsoever may induce us to forsake our Duty, to swerve from our Obedience, and to be guilty of any wilful Sin, whether it be the Love of Honour, Wealth, or Pleasure, the Fear of Want or Shame, or Pain, or any other Evil that is irksome to our Nature, and which we would be glad at all Hazards to avoid; whatever, I say, may by any means induce us to be wanting in our Duty to Almighty God, whether we actually comply with it or not, may be called a Temptation or Trial; because Trial is so made of our Faith and Virtue, and it is seen from our Conduct at such times as these, whether we are willing to forsake Christ for the sake of the World, or the World for the sake of Christ. *If the deceitfulness of riches*, the Allurements of Pleasure, the Frowns of the World, and the Terrors of Persecution cannot cause us to forfeit our Trust in God, nor divert us from the Pursuit of Heaven, Temptations are then Blessings to us. On the other hand, if we are captivated

SERM. vated and subdu'd by Pleasure ; if, *as riches increase,*

XXIV. *we set our hearts upon them ; if as soon as tribulation or persecutions arise, because of the word, we are offended ;* if Temptation of any kind makes us yield to its Assaults, and is too strong to be resisted by us, it is then a great Evil to be so exposed to Danger, such an Evil as we may lawfully desire to escape, and pray to God that by his Grace we may avoid it. Since therefore we have reason to distrust our own Strength, and to acknowledge with the Apostle, *that our Sufficiency is of God,* since we know not how soon we may be mastered and subdued by the Multitude of Temptations that perpetually beset us, we are here taught to pray, that, so far as is consistent with our present state of Trial and Probation, we may be rescued and delivered from them : That forasmuch as he knows what Strength we have, what Resistance we can make, and how far we may be safely trusted, he would so far adapt the Temptation to our Strength, or so strengthen us with his blessed Spirit, that we may be able *to endure unto the end,* or in the words of the Apostle, *that he may not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but may with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.* By Temptation therefore, in the words before us, we are to understand those Temptations only, which are too great to be resisted by us, those which God knows to be beyond our Strength, and, if he were to suffer them to be exercised upon us, would most certainly produce our Ruin.

But if this be the meaning of Temptation in my Text, it may be asked, Secondly, in what sense God may lead us into it ; for if God never leads us into such Temptations, what need have we to pray against



against them? And yet to say that he does, is to SERM.  
make him the Author of all the Sins we commit XXIV.  
against him, contrary to the express Command of  
the Apostle, *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am  
tempted of God: For God cannot be tempted with evil,  
neither tempteth he any man.* But forasmuch as what-  
soever is done in the World, is done at least by the  
Permission of God; and the Tempter himself, the  
great Enemy of Mankind, cannot exercise his Art  
upon us, without *his* Consent, who restrains his  
Power, and sets Bounds to his malicious Projects:  
for these reasons the Temptations, which are exe-  
cuted and contrived by the Malice and Art of Sa-  
tan, not with a design to make trial of our Virtue,  
and to give us an occasion to exercise our Patience,  
that it may shine with a more distinguished Lustre,  
but with a wicked desire to withdraw us from our  
Duty, and to tempt us to Sin and Misery; even  
these, I say, may be said, in some sense, to be brought  
upon us by the Counsel of God. Hence it is that  
we find God by the mouth of his holy Prophets,  
very frequently asserting his own Power and Supre-  
macy, by all the Evil that is brought about in the  
Earth. *I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form  
the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and cre-  
ate evil; I the Lord do all these things.*

Now it is certain, that so bountiful and kind a Be-  
ing cannot possibly, by his own Choice, or without  
absolute Necessity, be the Author of any Evil in the  
World. When therefore it is said, that he creates  
Evil, the meaning can only be, that he suffers it:  
That he, who could, if he pleased, prevent the doing  
it, does nevertheless for good reasons permit it to be  
done, giving Power to those who are wickedly inclin-  
ed, to bring about their malicious Purposes; not op-  
posing

SERM. posing their attempts, nor over-ruling their designs,  
 XXIV. but allowing them to proceed, without lett or hindrance, till they have executed their destructive Projects. Thus *Joseph* tells his Brethren, who had sold him into *Egypt*, that *God had sent him before them, to preserve their lives*; though in truth the Act which brought him thither, could not fail to be displeasing to Almighty God, as it was an envious and inhuman Act. And thus also the very Malice and Barbarity of the *Jews*, which brought our blessed Saviour to the Cross, is said to be no more, *than God's hand and God's counsel had determined before to be done*. Not that God liked or approved the Action, much less did he inspire such a Spirit of Revenge into the Actors of that bloody Tragedy; but because it was done by his Permission and Consent, and because the great work of our Redemption was accomplished by the Malice of these cruel Men: The work therefore, which they did, as it conducted to that End, is said to have been pre-ordained by him. And in this Sense it is, that we petition in my Text, not to be led into Temptation by God: Not as supposing that God actually tempts us, but only as he suffers us to be tempted by the Devil, and to be mis-led by our own Lusts and Passions. *For every one is tempted*, says the Apostle *St. James*, *when he is led away of his own lust, and inticed*. When therefore we offer up the Petition in my Text, we ought to make it our request to God, that he would grant us such a Measure of his preventing Grace, as may enable us to subdue those stubborn Enemies, which we constantly carry about in our Hearts; *that we may mortify our members, that are upon the earth*. And above all, that we may cope with our great Adversary the Devil, who plays our own Passions and Lusts against us, and makes them turn to our utter Ruin. It is with respect to his Subtlety

Subtlety and Malice, according to some, that it is added in my Text, *but deliver us from evil, i. e.* as they say, from the evil one, from him, who is the great Author of Wickedness among Men, whose Property it is to delight in Mischief, and who is in his own Nature as essentially evil, as God is just and good.

Thus am I come to the third Question I proposed, viz. what is the meaning of the word Evil in my Text. Some, as I said, understand it of the Devil; and in this sense there is a very proper and just Antithesis between the first and second Clauses in my Text. For then it will run thus, when it comes to be explained, *do not suffer us, O Lord, to be tempted above our strength, but deliver us from him that tempts us.* It is certain, that the word which is here rendered Evil, is in other Parts of Scripture applied to the Devil, and is so rendered in our *English* Version. Thus in *Matt.* 13. where our Saviour is explaining the Parable which he had given them of the Sower, speaking of those who through the Malice and Art of Satan lose the Benefit of God's word upon their Hearts, he calls the Devil *the wicked one*, which is expressed in the Original, by the same word which is rendered Evil in my Text. The same Title is given him also by *St. John*. I write unto you, young Men, says he, *because ye have overcome the wicked one*: Where again the word which is rendered *wicked one*, is the same that is rendered *Evil* in my Text. And as this Interpretation is very proper to the word, and agreeable to the place it is found in, so is it also supported by very great Authority, being so explained by the great *St. Chrysostom*, and after him, by many other Writers. It is further countenanced by the short Explanation of this Prayer, which the Church Catechism has given us: where among many other things, from which we pray to be delivered,

SERM. we pray also *against our ghostly Enemy*. From whence  
 XXIV. we are to learn, that if this be not the only, it is at  
 ~~~~~ least one Meaning of the words before us, too con-  
 siderable to be omitted in our Prayers.

But, Secondly, by Evil, may be understood what is meant by Evil in the common Sense of the word ; of which there are two Sorts, as it is commonly distinguished into natural and moral Evil. By natural Evil, we are to understand those Afflictions which befall us by the condition of our Nature : Those Difficulties we encounter, those Hardships we endure, those painful Sensations to which our Bodies are exposed, and those anxious Thoughts to which our Minds are subject, by the many Accidents and Calamities of Life : Such as Want, and Shame, and Pain, and Sorrow, the fatal Consequences of our first Parent's Fall, and the Punishment of his Children's Sins, These, as they are evil, and undefirable in themselves, we pray may be averted from us, not absolutely and unconditionally, but so far as God's Wisdom foresees they will prove hurtful to us. For doubtless, many times, it may be better for us to be so visited by the hand of God : His Providence may so order the Events of things, that what we call evil in this Sense of the word, may be indeed a very signal Blessing. Our Wants and Necessities, our Pains and Diseases, and the multitude of Afflictions and Calamities which befall us, may be sent to exercise our Patience, to confirm our Faith, to mortify our Lusts, to convince us of our Frailty, our Impotence, and Dependence ; and by shewing us, that in this World there is no lasting Happiness, to raise up our Thoughts, and to fix our Hopes on that Happiness which is to last for ever. These and other Benefits we may derive, by God's Blessing, from the Evils which befall us here ; and therefore we are not
 absolutely

absolutely to pray, that we may be free from Calamities and Afflictions, but so far only as they are real Evils; not desiring to be exempt from God's Chastisements and Corrections, when he knows we shall be the better for them, but that, so far as is consistent with this salutary Discipline, our Lives may be quiet and easy, and that we may have as much Pleasure and Complacency in them, as the Condition of our Nature, the Disposition of the World, and the Good of our Souls permit. And in this Sense it is, that we pray to God to be delivered from all natural Evil. As to moral Evil, which is the Evil of Sin, with respect to this, as we cannot be too careful to avoid it, so neither can we be too earnest and importunate with God, that it will please him to deliver us from it. Here we may give a Loose to our most ardent Wishes, because we are sure they are agreeable to his Will, and that our Prayers of this kind are as acceptable to him, as to us they will prove useful and beneficial. Lastly, by thus praying to be delivered from Sin, we do in effect pray to be delivered from Punishment, and consequently from everlasting Death; which is the last thing implied by the word Evil in my Text, and with respect to which all other Evils are matters of small consequence or regard. Thus have I explained the full meaning of my Text, which to the end that it may the better be remembred and understood, I shall leave with you in the following Paraphrase.

Do thou, O God, who seeest that we are beset with many dangerous and great Temptations, whose Will it is that in this state of Trial we should constantly be exposed to Danger; thou who knowest the secret Thoughts and Dispositions of our Hearts, and what Trials we have Strength to bear; so mortify and subdue

SERM.
XXIV.

SERM. due our corrupt Affections, so curb and control our
XXIV. great Enemy the Devil, that we may never be tempted
 beyond our Strength, but as often as we are assaulted
 by his Malice from without, or betray'd by our Lusts
 within, may we be supported with Strength and
 Wisdom from above, and enabled to escape from
 Danger. Preserve us by these means, if it be thy
 Will, O Lord, from all Evil that can happen to us;
 from the natural Evils which continually surround us,
 by thy appointment, in this Vale of Misery; so far
 as thou seest they will be Evils to us, and of no
 use to our spiritual advantage; and above all from
 the moral Evil of Sin, and from the Evil of Punish-
 ment which attends it: That upon the whole, being
secure from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly
Enemy, and from everlasting Death, we may obtain
thy Promises, which exceed all that we can desire,
 through the Merits of our dear Redeemer, to whom,
 with the Father, and the holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c.

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